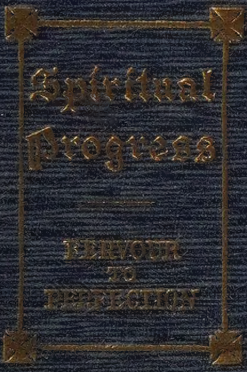

Spiritual
Progress
FERVOUR
TO
PERFECTION

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

Jesus Crucified; or, The Science of the Cross. In the Form of Meditations. By FF. PIERRE MARIE and JEAN NICOLAS GROU, of the Society of Jesus. Translated by L. M. LEGGATT.

The Chief Catholic Devotions. By LOUIS BOUCARD, Vicaire de SAINT-SULPICE. Translated by W. H. MITCHELL, M.A.

Voices of the Valley. The Path of Virtues. Compiled by FIONA MCKAY.

God's Golden Gifts. By FLORA LUCY FREEMAN. With Preface by the late MGR. BENSON.

Our Home in Heaven. By the Abbé MAX CARON, Superior of the Little Seminary at Versailles. Translated by EDITH STANIFORTH.

Friends and Apostles of the Sacred Heart. By Rev. P. CHANDLERY, S.J., Author of "Pilgrim-Walks in Rome," etc.

A Spiritual Album. Containing the Cream of Many Books in One, Hopeful and Good for All Times. Second Edition.

Spiritual Progress

Vol. I. LUKEWARMNESS TO FERVOUR.
Second Edition.

Vol. II. FERVOUR TO PERFECTION.
Second Edition.

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion. In Union with the Sacred Heart. By Rev. G. VILLEFRANCHE, S.J.

Within the Soul. Helps in the Spiritual Life. A Book of Little Essays. By Rev. M. J. WATSON, S.J. Fifth Edition.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

II

FROM FERVOUR TO PERFECTION

Spiritual Progress

II

Fervour to Perfection

(*Complete in itself apart from* I. LUKEWARMNESS TO FERVOUR)

by L. BEAUDENON (†1916)

From the French

London
Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd.
Publishers to the Holy See
1925

44248

THIRD IMPRESSION

Nihil Obstat.
OSMUNDUS COONEY, O.F.M.
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur.
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
VICARIUS GENERALIS

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 5 Junii, 1912.

Made and Printed in Great Britain

NOTE

I

This book contains two parts.—The first gives the *Immediate Preparation for Confession*, and adds thereto, by way of supplement, an exposition of *Christian morals*, as well as *reasoned motives* for contrition : this is the *usual* part.—The second, on the other hand, is the *theoretical* part, and this forms a clear and substantial little treatise of direction.

The part entitled, *Direction*, begins with definitions. First of all, we have to get at a thorough understanding of the words, *fervour* and *perfection* (their starting-point, and where they end) ; then, we have to lay down the characteristics of the *state* of conscience which is the *subject of this book*.

This state of *imperfect fervour* comprises sins and, above all, imperfections.

These *sins* and *imperfections* are not spontaneous, but they are *effects* which belong to deep *causes*. These causes are, in the first place, those that *paralyze* spiritual activity. We have reduced them to three classes : want of *effort*, want of *purification*, and want of *peace*. These analyses have been made with peculiar thoroughness. Their combination

forms a *synthesis* which throws light upon the whole of the psychology of piety, and leads on to a logical *method* of spiritual warfare.

The *first chapter* is really the basis of the whole work; and whoever has a thorough mastery of it will hold the key to direction.

The *second chapter* gives the causes that make fervour *go astray*, and the *third*, the *helps* that give it life. These clear ideas enlighten the devout as to any *deviations* that may easily occur, and also give certain *means of training* which are, perhaps, less plainly observed in other works.

If anyone is surprised at the small space assigned to many essential matters, such as the practice of the virtues, we have only to say: the idea of this book was that it should be used along with the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, to which splendid work it aims at furnishing a few developments and explanations that would not have been required by the contemporaries of St. Francis of Sales; and, particularly, to give a logical sequence to the questions that could not be thus arranged in the collection of letters from which it was drawn.

Chapter IV aims at realizing the great thought of the Incarnation, *to restore all things in Christ* If Jesus Christ gives the *pattern* of spiritual life which we should imitate, He is also, through the Holy, Ghost

the *agent* who shapes it in the inmost recesses of the conscience. Happy are those, who, in their work of self-reform, go to Jesus for their *example* and for *energy*. Through this twofold effort the life of nature yields to a higher life, as night melts away before the day. This is no *new* method ; it was that of St. Paul ; nor is it a *mystical* doctrine, for it does not involve any extraordinary experiences. The life of Jesus is the life of *every* soul, just as His body, in the Eucharist, is their food : two equally astounding marvels, which harmoniously complete and involve one another.

II

This instruction is intended for a class of persons who are worthy of all interest. Though full of good-will, they make no progress, and after a few fruitless essays at a higher life, they are once more back in their old devotional routine. In what were they lacking ? In *initiation*.

Initiation may be given by the spoken word of the confessor, but it will be singularly facilitated by a *written method :* the book is always at hand ; it goes into every detail ; it gives a general view of the whole and affords the results of long experience. Priests who have put these manuals into the hands of those whom they direct observe how easy it becomes to train them.

In fact, this book considers confession as an *instrument of progress:* that is its *aim.* The general means it proposes is to *specialize effort:* that is its *method.* But, in order to specialize effort, two things must be thoroughly mastered: the soul of man and the laws of the spiritual life: this is why we have been so thorough in our analyses. Those who see in this too much subtlety show that they miss the essential idea of direction. Perhaps they are satisfied with applying general principles to every soul, without considering that the work of directing *each* person is a *work apart,* a work which is very delicate, and so difficult, that St. Francis of Sales counsels Philothea to entrust herself only to a director *chosen out of ten thousand.* For every soul, in fact, there is a *decisive* point, and the question is, how to distinguish it amidst the complexity of good qualities and defects. Such discernment requires a mind which is *independent,* so far as others are concerned, of its own form of piety; a *supple* mind that is practised in making *distinctions,* a mind *at its ease* in all these matters. A workman does not know his machine well unless he can take all its parts to pieces, and set them to work with a deft and sure hand.

III

This volume, being intended for the fervent, does not confine itself to setting forth precepts, it scatters *counsels* everywhere ; hence, you should not regard yourself as bound in conscience by any particular recommendation, however strongly it may be urged ; and do not consider as sins all that you are advised to declare in confession. The avowal of certain imperfect acts, and even of certain failings, is much more illuminating for *direction* than to accuse one's self of *accidental sins*. Therefore, follow our suggestions faithfully, but without any narrowness. Especially consider the *end*, which is perfection ; and go towards it by the road which, given *your nature* and *circumstances*, will lead you to it most unerringly.

This book is not a book to read only, but to meditate on, and to put into practice. Constantly recur to it. Do not ignore the doctrinal points which seem to be above your present level : the ideal shows the end, and its beauty is never dwelt upon in vain.

IV

Though this work does not offer itself in the guise of a treatise on the *spiritual life*, it nevertheless contains the substance of

such a book. Those who wish to follow it in a methodical manner need only use the table below as a guide.—We only give what is essential, so as not to overcharge it, and we modify a few of the headings here and there for the sake of clearness.

The Spiritual Life

I.—*Its constitution.*

1.	The supernatural element - -	Vol. II.	294
2.	Jesus' life in us - - - -	Vol. II	384

II.—*Its activity.*

1.	Want of activity or lukewarmness	Vol. I.	105
2.	Spiritual activity or fervour -	Vol. II.	128
3.	Perfection - - - -	Vol. II.	131
4.	Nature of piety - - - -	Vol. II.	283

III.—*Its development.*

1.	Stirring up the spiritual life - -	Vol. I.	201
2.	Consolidating it - - - -	Vol. I.	241
3.	Following up God's action - -	Vol. II.	230
4.	Aids to fervour - - - -	Vol. II.	332
5.	Summary of devotional duties -	Vol. II.	56

IV.—*Its laws, its diseases and their remedies.*

This is the object of the whole work.—Greater profit will be obtained, if reading is not begun until a *study* of these fundamental ideas has been made.

CONTENTS

PAGE

NOTE - - - - - - - - - v

PART I.—CONFESSION

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION—PRELIMINARY DISPOSITIONS - - - - - - - 3

Recollection and Confidence - - - 4

Self-knowledge and the Sense of One's Sins 6

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE - - - 9

Counsels - - - - - - - 9

List of Questions - - - - - - 11

Search for the Cause of Your Sins - - 16

CONTRITION - - - - - - - 17

From Fear to Love - - - - - 18

My Sins - - - - - - - 24

My Infirmities - - - - - - 26

Incurable Misery - - - - - - 28

The Sepulchre of Selfishness - - - 31

What Keeps us away from Jesus - - 33

The Revelation of Love - - - - - 35

Jesus suffering through us - - - 38

The Need of God - - - - - - 41

The Word that Transforms - - - 44

Encouragement to One who Feels that he is always Imperfect - - - - - 46

PAGE

FIRM PURPOSE - - - - - - 51

AT THE CONFESSIONAL - - - - 52

AFTER CONFESSION—At Mary's Feet - - 53

APPENDIX I

A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN MORALS CONSIDERED DEVOTIONALLY - - - 56

I. DUTIES TOWARDS GOD - - - 58

II. DUTIES TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS - - 66

III. DUTIES TO OURSELVES - - - 76

APPENDIX II

MOTIVES AND INCENTIVES OF CONTRITION - 88

FIRST METHOD—INTRINSIC MOTIVES - - 92

VENIAL SIN AS IT CONCERNS GOD - - 92

It is in Opposition to His Will - - 92

It disturbs God's Plan - - - - 93

It withdraws us from God's Influence - 94

It lessens God in His Work - - - 95

It sadly hinders the Love of God - - 95

It involves a certain Contempt of God - 97

VENIAL SIN WITH REGARD TO MYSELF - 98

It lowers my Ideal - - - - 98

It diminishes my Happiness in Heaven - 99

It compromises earthly Happiness - - 100

It weakens my Power of Action and Prayer 102

PAGE

VENIAL SIN WITH REGARD TO FERVOUR - 103
It checks the Infusion of actual Grace - 103
It impairs our Nature - - - - 104
It sets aside some defensive Barriers - 106
VENIAL SIN WITH REGARD TO OUR NEIGHBOUR - - - - - - - 108
VENIAL SIN AS REVEALED BY PURGATORY - 109
A PRAYER OF HOPE - - - - - 112
SECOND METHOD—AT JESUS'S FEET - - 116

PART II.—DIRECTION

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS

CONFESSION AND DIRECTION - - - 125
FERVOUR AND PERFECTION—Fervour - 128
Perfection - - - - - - 131
IMPERFECT FERVOUR—Its Characteristics - 133
Sins and Reaction - - - - - 135
Acts of Imperfection - - - - 138
TWO METHODS OF SELF-REFORMATION - 143

CHAPTER I

CAUSES THAT PARALYZE SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

FIRST CAUSE—WANT OF EFFORT

THE LAW OF LEAST RESISTANCE - - 147
THE APPLICATION OF THIS LAW - - 150
In Exercises of Piety - - - - 150
In the Interior Life - - - - 151
In the Practice of the Virtues - - 153

PAGE

INSUFFICIENCY OF VITAL REACTION - 154

TREATMENT — STRENGTHENING THE WILL 158

TRAINING THE WILL BY ITS OWN EXERCISE—

Its Conditions - - - - - 162

Its Exercise - - - - - 163

Its Hindrances - - - - - 164

TRAINING THE WILL BY THE INFLUENCE OF MORAL FORCES - - - - 167

The Influence of Convictions - - 167

The Influence of Feeling - - - 170

TRAINING THE WILL BY MORTIFICATION - 179

Corporal Mortification - - - 179

Penal Mortification - - - - 181

The Practice of both kinds of Mortification - - - - - - - 182

SECOND CAUSE—WANT OF PURIFICATION - 184

WANT OF PURIFICATION IN THE INTENTIONS 185

TREATMENT—ORDER IN OUR INTENTIONS 192

The Theory of Intention - - - 193

The Practice of this Purification - - 203

WANT OF PURIFICATION IN OUR INCLINATIONS - - - - - - - 208

Inferior Pleasures - - - - 208

Excessive Desire for Esteem - - 209

Affections and Aversions - - - 211

Likings and Repugnances - - - 212

Curiosity and Caprice - - - - 213

TREATMENT—ORDER IN OUR INCLINATIONS 216

PAGE

THIRD CAUSE—WANT OF PEACE - - - 220

I. EAGERNESS — i. Its Nature. — ii. Its Causes.—iii. Its Kinds.—iv. Its Characteristics.—v. Its Effects.—vi. Its Pretexts.—vii. Its great Harm - 222

TREATMENT — THE SPIRIT OF HOLY DEPENDENCE - - - - 228

The Method of Combat - - - 228

The Method of Union - - - - 229

II. CONTRACTION OF SOUL - - - - 243

i. From Troubles of Conscience - 246

TREATMENT—SUBMISSIVE RESIGNATION 250

ii. From Troubles of Life - - 256

TREATMENT—HUMBLE RESIGNATION - 263

GENERAL REMARKS AS TO ALL KINDS OF CONTRACTION OF HEART - - 266

III. SCRUPULOSITY - - - - - 269

TREATMENT—OBEDIENCE - - - 275

CHAPTER II

CAUSES THAT LEAD SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY ASTRAY

FALSE NOTIONS AS TO PRINCIPLES

I. Errors as to the Nature of Piety - - 283

II. Errors as to the Use of Means of Fervour 286

III. Errors as to what the Love of God requires of us - - - - - - 290

IV. Errors as to what to expect from the Supernatural Element - - - 294

PAGE

V. Errors as to the Effects of Holy Communion - - - - - - - 306
VI. Errors as to the Function of Prayer - 311

ILLUSIONS OR ERRORS AS TO OURSELVES

I. The Illusion that Consolation means Holiness - - - - - - - 314
II. The Illusion of those who are sustained by their Surroundings and think themselves Steadfast - - - - 317
III. The Illusion of believing one's State of Imperfection is due to external Causes 318
IV. The Illusion of those who think they are called to do great Things and who neglect present Duties - - - 321
V. The Illusion of those who think that Spiritual Reading is unnecessary - 323
VI. The Illusion of those who think they no longer need a Director - - - 326
VII. The Illusion of those who are unable to find a Director - - - - - 329
VIII. The Illusion of those who abuse the Direction they get - - - - 330

CHAPTER III

HELPS TO FERVOUR

ATTRACTION - - - - - - - - - 336
TWO GENERAL ATTRACTIONS — i. Towards the Inner Life - - - - - 338

PAGE

ii. Towards the Active Life - - - 340

CERTAIN SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS—i. Reparation - - - - - - - 343
ii. Zeal - - - - - - - - 344
iii. Various Special Attractions - - 346
iv. Attractions towards particular Virtues and Devotions - - - - 346

SURROUNDINGS - - - - - - - 348
Material Surroundings - - - - 348
Moral Surroundings - - - - - 350
Christian Surroundings - - - - 352

RENEWAL - - - - - - - - 355
The daily Morning Renewal - - - 359
Probations - - - - - - - 362
The monthly Retreat - - - - - 364
The annual Retreat - - - - - 368

CHAPTER IV

SELF-REFORM THROUGH JESUS

JESUS OUR MODEL - - - - - - 374

JESUS OUR LIFE - - - - - - - 384
What life is - - - - - - - 384
How Jesus is our Life - - - - 386
Doctrinal Conclusions - - - - 391
Devotional Conclusions - - - - 396

PAGE

JESUS OUR LOVE - - - - - - - 401

Jesus in the Eucharist—A Centre of Fervour 402

Jesus in our Neighbour—The Object of our Charity - - - - - - - - 405

SIGNS OF PROGRESS - - - - - - 414

TABLE - - - - - - - - 419

PART I

CONFESSION

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

PRELIMINARY DISPOSITIONS

1. *Be recollected.*—On the way to church, avoid talking.—On getting there, deeply adore Jesus in the tabernacle ; put yourself under His eyes ; wrap yourself in silence.—Think seriously : suppose this were to be my last confession !

Steep yourself in confidence. — Do you happen to be rather downcast or uneasy ? Let the feeling of God's loving-kindness pervade you : do not forget that you are going to your Father.—Fly to the Blessed Virgin Mary as little children run to their mother when they are in difficulties : tell her to *present you to Jesus.*

2. *Settle on your object.*—As soon as you feel recollected and a little more at home, ask yourself this question : What do I want ? (St. Ignatius).

I want to get a *thorough knowledge* of my failings, I want to *regret* them, I want to be *better.*

Ask for these graces in all simplicity.

Here are a few forms suited to obtain such dispositions :

I. To obtain Recollection and Confidence

" The Master is come and calleth for thee " (St. John xi).

Before the tabernacle, the outline of which rises amidst the dimness, and in the silence which is all about me, I seem to hear a voice saying : " The Master is here and calleth for thee." Yea, Jesus, Thou art here, and if my poor heart is too little conscious of it, my faith declares it aloud ; Thou art here, and Thou art the same as Thou wert when Thou calledst Mary Magdalene at Bethany ; Thou hast the same kindness, the same power, and the same zeal ; Thou art here at this hour, and Thou callest even me !

Oh, that I could run to Thee with the love of the penitent sinner ! Oh, that I could pour out all the odours of my broken heart at Thy feet !

If I am not like the Magdalene who loved to the point of immolation, Thou art the same Jesus who inspired her with such generosity. Can it be that heaven has changed Thy heart ? Can space fix any gulf between Thee and our poverty ? Canst Thou grow weary of forgiving ?

Thou less loving! Thou far away from me! Thou weary of forgiveness! But then, why dost Thou dwell in this tabernacle, lost and hidden, and, as it were, brought to nothingness? Why dost Thou condemn Thyself to the long night solitudes, or to the still more cruel isolation wrought by our indifference? Formerly, while on earth, Thou didst not fix upon one place, Thou wentest from dwelling to dwelling; to-day, the tabernacle is never empty. Thou abidest therein for me!

Oh, if I doubt Thy love, it is because I do not feel my own; and if I see Thee as it were afar off, it is because my faith is but dim. Yes, indeed, Thou art there, and Thou lookest upon me. If I only murmur a prayer, Thou hearest me! If I weep, Thou art moved. If, on rising, I approach Thine altar, Thou stretchest out Thine arms to me!

Nevertheless, I have nothing to attract Thee: neither worth, nor merit, nor even, alas! great desires. Like a beggar, I have only my needs and my supplication; but, as for Thee, Thou hast Thy great pity, the pity of the kind and good; and what is better still, the pity that is touched by kinship; and I am of Thy kin, for I have Thy blood and Thy life!

Look upon me, too, with hope; I shall not be always so cold and cowardly, and so unworthy of Thee; I am eager to enter into the circle of Thy grace which uplifts us to higher regions, nearer to Thee, whether we are weak or strong, whether we are guilty or innocent.

II. To obtain Self-Knowledge and the Sense of One's Sins

"O my God, enlighten my darkness" (Ps. xvii).

I cannot see clearly into the depths of my soul. I feel, indeed, that I am full of sins and numerous imperfections, but I cannot distinguish them; my eyes see nought but darkness.

O Holy Ghost, as at the time when the earth was without form and covered with darkness, so now over me repeat the words: "Let there be light!" So many shadows arise in the abyss which goes by the name of my heart: shadows of selfishness and cupidity, shadows of pride and irritability, shadows of depression and discouragement, and so many others—all of them combine to hide and steal away from my sight even the sins of the last few days.

Show me them in all their *reality*, in their hidden *motives*, and in their *causes* which lie concealed deep within me. May I not be

the victim of some illusion? One notices so little what one does habitually. *O my God, illumine the darkness of my conscience.*

"And I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of prayers: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zach. xii).

O Spirit of grace, O sense of the supernatural, thou showest how every sin wounds Love; give my poor heart the regret that it needs. O Spirit of prayer and of good desire, take entire possession of me. O Jesus, who art so high in heaven, how can I conceive that my sins reach even to Thee! O Thou whose suffering we cannot see, how are we to pity Thee? And nevertheless, all the ages of Christendom have bathed Thee with their tears, and how many are there around me, far better than I, who lean over their crucifixes and utter groanings that come from their hearts and go to Thine.

O Holy Ghost, let Thy light shine upon me so that I may understand; stir me with Thy holy motions so that I may feel! In the order of faith, I can only bring my desire and my prayer; and even there, I need grace in order to desire and to pray. O Jesus, show me Thy pierced hands and open heart, and make me feel that these wounds are my work!

Invocation of Mary

O Mary, if thou hadst done what to thee was impossible, if thou hadst offered thy Son the least possible resistance, what wouldst thou not have felt and done? What tears wouldst thou have deemed sufficient to make reparation for such an offence? What harrowing expressions would thy sorrow not have found? What an increase of affection springing from thy woe wouldst thou not have added to all the love of thy heart?

O Mary, O Mother, give me thy poor child, for the sake of thy other Child, to feel something of the emotions for which I so deeply yearn.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

I. Counsels

N.B.—The *obligatory* conditions of confession are set forth in detail in Chapter IV, Volume I. All that goes beyond this is only matter of *counsel*. Many of the questions in this *Examination of Conscience* are not matter of sin.—This observation also applies to the whole of this work.

Everyone who goes frequently to confession should make his examination *short* and *without anxiety*:—short, or else it encroaches on the time required for the more important work of reform;—without anxiety, for the accusation of venial sins is, after all, optional.

1. Begin by recalling the kind of sins which, in your last confession, you *specially proposed* to avoid. This counsel is of capital importance; it is the very sinews of the whole of our method.

2. Next, make a fairly rapid survey to see whether you have committed any voluntary sins of a more serious nature; they will easily occur to the mind.

3. After that, if necessary, run through the following list of questions. It is inevitably lengthy, since it is meant for every-

one and comprises all kinds of duties.—Do not attempt to bear in mind all the accusations you could possibly find. Confine yourself to those that are *peculiar* to your case, and more particularly to those that are *certain* and *important*.—Two or three sins, *clearly seen* in their *motives* and *causes*, guarantee the best results from your confession. Remember that absolution wipes out all venial sins, whether *explicitly* confessed or not, as soon as your contrition includes them in a *general* motive.

II. List of Questions

DUTIES TOWARDS GOD

1. I have sometimes fulfilled my duties to God with a kind of regret ;—I have lacked resignation in my troubles, especially when they arose from human perversity.

2. When I have had to make a serious decision, I have thought almost exclusively of my own good pleasure, without considering my duty.—In the morning, I forgot or omitted to offer my actions ;—or I did it in a routine manner, without any real devotion.

3. I have not had confidence in God, and have let myself be depressed or discouraged, and this has resulted in some slackness.—My confidence is not at all supernatural; it breaks down as soon as human props give way. I have failed in this way in various circumstances.

4. I have not been diligent in binding myself to God by any feelings of *affection*, when I had leisure ; and by union with His *will*, when I was busy.

5. I have omitted such and such a prayer or exercise, or I did it badly ;—I took no trouble to put myself seriously in the presence of God before beginning ; I got no advantage from my last confession or communion—for such and such a reason.

6. Keeping Sunday holy.—Abstinence and fasting.—Respect for the Church and her ministers.

DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR

Superiors.—1. I do not see God in them; and I address them in too free-and-easy a style; I have sometimes withstood them; I have criticized and found fault with them.

2. I have obeyed them reluctantly, and rashly cherished the conviction that they were mistaken; I have done what they asked me to do without any willingness.

3. Have I ever thought of showing them affection, gratitude, esteem, or confidence?

Equals.—1. I have been wanting in deference, I have shown some disdain, or haughtiness, or perhaps, some contempt.—There was not enough propriety in my behaviour; not enough reserve in my conversation.

2. I have been too exacting in enforcing my rights;—I have uttered judgements without sufficient reason and without any call for doing so;—I have repeated things that might have done mischief; I have exaggerated, aggravated, and perhaps, invented them.

3. I have been disagreeable to those who did not please me, especially at home;—I have talked in such a manner as to give pain, or to cause discouragement;—I have not taken enough pains to please, or I did it from impulse, and without thinking of God;

—I did not shake off feelings of aversion, or of jealousy—my talk and behaviour showed it.

Inferiors.—1. I have not shown enough consideration for those dependent on me; I have spoken to them roughly, and sometimes contemptuously; I do not try to make them better;—there has been nothing of the supernatural in my relationships with them.

2. I have abused my position in not taking enough pains to be just;—I have aroused irritation with constant fault-finding;—I have exasperated them by being exacting to excess;—I have given a bad example by my failings;—I have been slack in watchfulness, or in administering wise rebukes.

3. I have been wanting in patience with them, too sparing in encouragement or praise; I have not shown enough consideration for their troubles.

The Poor.—Have I given to them according to my means?—Have I loved taking a personal interest in them?—Have I been chilled by their moral wretchedness or by their ingratitude, as if Jesus were not hidden beneath their tattered clothing?

DUTIES TOWARDS ONE'S SELF

1. *Humility.*—I have allowed self-love to puff me up, on thinking, doubtless with some exaggeration, of my successes;—I

have been weak enough to fish for praise, sometimes under the cloak of false modesty ; —I have been irritated when I did not get any ;—I have cherished a certain amount of disdain for those in some respects beneath me : by position, gifts, etc. ;—I have exhibited it quite uselessly ;—I have been too fond of rich display, which makes one conspicuous, or I have been depressed by my poverty, which comes to the same thing ;—I am not sufficiently familiar with the thought on which humility is based : *i.e.*, that I am nothing and God is everything.

2. *Truth.*—I have been rather affected, not natural, rather formal and embarrassing ; my expression has not been open and pleasing —I have sometimes been not quite straightforward, told some lies (say why ?), indulged in exaggeration.

3. *Purity.*—Thoughts, imagination, desires ?—Imprudent visits, reading, pleasures ? —Affections and reveries ?—Sense-pleasures, the devil's allies : luxurious comforts, epicurism, perfumes, lascivious music, enervating idleness, aggravated by having nothing to do ?

4. *Disinterestedness.*—I am too anxious about matters involving my own interests : —I have given as little as possible, either to those I employ, or to the poor ;—I have refused to help, under the pretext that one is always deceived ;—I think a great deal

of what I like, and very little of what pleases others ;—when I give, I reckon on what will be given me in return.

5. *Cheerfulness.*—I did not react against a fit of ill-humour or of excessive hilarity.—I have spoken with hastiness, and hence have committed several sins : I have given pain, been indiscreet, compromised the success of a piece of business, lost my own peace and upset those about me ;—I did not observe my resolution to be calm.

6. *Oversensitiveness.*—I was too ready to believe that I was disliked ;—that people try to cross me ;—I have cherished bitterness and malevolence ;—hence I have lost my peace, and all liking for prayer.

7. *Prudence.*—I have been imprudent from not taking time to think ;—I have managed to get compromised through not asking for advice.—I should have escaped such and such a sin, if I had prayed.

8. *Personal Improvement.*—I am not diligent enough in trying to be better, more agreeable in society, and that through carelessness, perhaps by mistake, not thinking myself bound thereto in conscience.

NOTE.—The same list is given farther on (p. 58), in a more reasoned and fuller form.—It may be used from time to time.—It may be consulted with advantage on any point on which more thorough knowledge is required.

III. Search for the Cause of Your Sins

If you would make greater progress, follow up your shortcomings till you find the cause from which they spring. It is in order to facilitate this work that we have analysed, later on, the *causes that paralyse the soul's activity*.

It would take you too long to go through them all, and your attention would get scattered; go directly to what corresponds with your state. The following suggestions will guide your selection.

1. Want of *effort* (see this heading, p. 147) is seen in the careless conduct of one's spiritual life: devotional exercises omitted or badly done, the soul heavy, irresolute, unmortified.

2. Want of *purification* (see p. 184) is shown in tastes opposed to what is right, temptations, sins; the soul seems sick. The motives always display some taint of *self*.

3. Want of *peace* (see p. 220) is manifested in uneasiness: the impatience of being in a hurry, of bearing trouble, of over-scrupulosity.

Note.—The result of this inquiry should not be a vague and general *impression* of a defective state, but a *definite view* of its cause. A sort of inner thrill shows that one has put one's finger on the sore spot.

CONTRITION

To know what is wrong is much, but it is not all: it has to be put right. Contrition must enter into the guilty soul like a medicine that provokes a vital reaction. This medicine is to be found in any feeling that reacts against the evil: fear, love, tenderness of conscience, dignity, admiration of the good, horror of ingratitude, and the like.

The following aspirations and outpourings of affection are the repeated echoes of these motives; their aim is to impart a thrill to those delicate fibres which are sometimes untouched by reasoning;—we have given a large number of them so that they may correspond with the different bent of different people;—but avoid reading too many at a time; rather stop at any passage that strikes you, and allow it to sink quietly into your mind.

NOTE.—You will find the motives for contrition methodically set forth on p. 92.

From Fear to Love

The object of the following considerations is to give a lofty idea of God and a just notion of our own condition.—It does not directly point to contrition, but disposes one towards it.

You do not know how much that is splendid underlies the fear of God, nor all the depth of the feelings that it imparts ; you do not know all the elevation it gives to love.

It appears to you a narrow feeling which confines the heart, an inferior motive with a lowering influence, a gross kind of material to be left buried at the foundations of the building.

I

Lift up your eyes and contemplate that which is its first object. It is nought else than the *divine majesty*.

All that is great takes us in its grip, and all that is of surpassing immensity crushes us. When God offers Himself to our mind in all His bewildering attributes ; when, living and acting in all these attributes, He seems to regard us ; when His omnipotence and immensity and sovereign beauty come from all eternity and gather round about us ; then we are really lost, like an atom in space ; and do we not feel, as it were, the shudder which ran through the limbs of the prophets on

Horeb and Sinai? This sacred thrill is called *holy fear*. It is both adoration and humility, and submission to the supreme Majesty of a being who came from His hands weak and poor and wretched.

Do we not feel that the least resistance would be an act of temerity, and that the slightest impropriety would be a provocation, and that we should ever serve such a Being as this on bended knees?

II

From God's just demands arises formal fear. This fear consists in a feeling of absolute dependence, as well as in an apprehension of the evils that threaten us if we are so madly daring as to break away from it.

My life and soul and happiness on earth, and my eternal future, are in the hands of an omnipotent God. Every step I take, every beating of my heart, every thought in my brain, are beneath His regard; and what is more, they can only take place by His help.—He is the absolute Master of all the circumstances of my life. According to His will, I shall be happy or unhappy. Oh, how radically dependent am I!

I raise my eyes to God, my Lord, and my fear makes me fly to His loving-kindness for refuge I find this loving-kindness, and what have I to fear, since it is infinite?

Yes, God is *good and kind;* His loving-kindness is boundless. Yet, we must well understand, that it is boundless like everything in Him; but what is in God applies in an infinite manner only to Himself: God cannot give me either infinite perfection or infinite happiness; nor can He display the whole infinity of His loving-kindness towards me.—This infinite loving-kindness remains the object of our admiration, and becomes an incentive to the love of charity, which makes us love God, not because He is *good to us*, but because He is *infinitely good in Himself*.

If we were to limit our love to the measure of His benefits, we should lessen Him, for His benefits are necessarily restricted. To love Him for His own sake is to soar towards the infinite, it is to love Him in a fitting manner, it is to love Him as God; and at the same time, by this disinterested act we unite ourselves to Him by loving Him as He loves Himself!

What! must there be limits to the goodness of God with regard to ourselves? But everything shows it: hell and sorrow and evil, and even the second-rate pleasures which tire us out so quickly. These limits, which are a reason for holy fear, are our safeguard and an honour to us; if there were nothing to punish, nothing would be beyond

the range of our dreadful desire to abuse our facilities ; and if God were to deprive us of liberty, He would take away our crown, for this is the gift which brings us most closely to Him : there is a kind of creative power in liberty.

But if God keeps the infinity of His goodness within the abyss of His Being, He has the power and the will to make His goodness overflow upon us to a greater extent than any other of His attributes ; and as He knows all the depths of our misery, He extends to us His goodness, and, by His compassion, transforms our misery into His Mercy !

Yet, in spite of this, sinners oblige Him to bring His justice into play, and, a ter years of fidelity, souls are lost ! Hence, there are those whom He has long loved and whom He ceases to love ! What a dreadful mystery is this ! God able to love, and yet He knows that a day will come when He will hate ! Who, then, can be so thoughtless as not to fear ?

Let us be filled with humility and fear as we think of these terrible restrictions on the divine goodness ; let us dread lest we overstep them, and lest our thoughtlessness lead us to forget them. In our distress, let us remember that prayer and sorrow widen the area in which the divine mercy can act. Let us detach ourselves from all that hurts the

eyes of the Lord, and from all that robs Him of some part of ourselves. He means to be put before everything else, because He deserves it: it is His right;—and also because He alone can satisfy us: and here is an instance of His goodness!

III

Lastly, let us rise to the pure and life-giving region of *filial love*. Let us get beyond the common notion which, in the name of Father, sees only a borrowed appellation; let us recognize that God is our Father by the communication of His own nature.

It is not creation that makes Him so, it is Baptism. What! am I then of the true blood? am I of the family of God? Like the child who carries on the likeness of his father, am I the image of my heavenly Father? Yes, and on this ground alone, heaven is my heritage, as we inherit the property of our parents; and heaven is not like human happiness, but it is God's own happiness. There I shall see my Father face to face, and I shall see that my features resemble His! Already on earth these features begin to take shape, but dimly; moral goodness, especially the virtue of love, develops them; but only glory will make them shine in all their brightness.

Do you understand why God has shown such patience towards us and given us so much help? Do you understand why He has sent His only Son on earth, and why He has made Him poor and humble and suffering—like you? Do you understand why this adorable Son willed to remain with you in the Eucharist and to complete his Incarnation by Holy Communion? It is because we all belong to *one family!* In a family, all the members make a unity. In it, patience holds out long; wrongs are quickly forgotten; help is reciprocal. . . . And I, beneath the brightness of all that is so unspeakably sweet, poor, ignorant, frail and inclined to evil, I tremble and fear. . . .

This Father who is in heaven, this Jesus who comes into my soul, these ties of kinship, this eternal union, and all these subtle things—I fear to break them! All this ideal love, I fear to spoil it! I fear to sadden these hearts which I love and which love me!

O filial fear, gift of the Holy Ghost, the highest development of my affection, be thou the protector of my fidelity, the saviour of my obedience, and the stimulus of my progress; inspire thou me to love more and to love better; and when I lift up my eyes to the Majesty on high, when I fathom all that is demanded for His intervention, I

shall fear less the thought of His justice than the dread of bringing grief to my Father's heart.

My Sins

Scito et vide—"*Know and see*" (Jer. ii).

O my God and Father, whose child I am, I have again grieved Thee, I have sinned thus, and in many other ways.

It is true, my dear Lord, that I did not then think of giving Thee pain, and that the sorrow of Jesus was not in my mind; nevertheless I felt that I was doing wrong, and I bent my conscience to compliance with my desire for gratification.—And now I dearly regret it, and I want to expiate my sins to the full and to drown them in repentance? Oh, if I could only have prevented them from occurring! I should not have grieved my Father. I should not have brought any fresh disturbance into the divine designs.

And to think that owing to these sins I have *fallen* in His esteem, and am *less loved* by Him and *less united* to His life! And to think that I have made myself *less able* to do good, *less worthy* of being hearkened to! To think that I am lowered and weaker; and that I have stamped my lineaments, made in the likeness of God, with moral deformity! —Oh, if I could only get my sins forgotten and make amends! Oh, if I could repair

and wipe them out!—Oh, if I could only rise again and regain self-possession!—I desire God that Thou shalt have as much glory and joy as if I had never sinned; I desire Thee to love me to the full of Thine intention; I desire not to forfeit anything of the power of helping others!

And, for this purpose, I will begin by thoroughly abasing myself in humiliation and confusion. This is the right posture, and I accept it; it will reach God's heart, and I love Him.—I acknowledge my poverty and wretchedness, and I detest them; they are made up of my past sins, they are the cause of my present sins, and a danger for all the days to come. O Father, I offer them to Thee, do Thou pity me as a child who appeals for the pity of his earthly parent.

I also bid my pride look upon them and be humbled; I call to mind the purity of the Saints and of the Angels of heaven, and their love which is incapable of the least defection or of the most transitory forgetfulness; I ask myself what they would feel if they found themselves—which is impossible—guilty of the sins of which I accuse myself almost without any shame.

And even on earth and around me, there are souls so generous and devoted and full of self-detachment! And such are both more loveable and better able to love! They give God the joys I deny Him! They

honour Him, and help people to appreciate Him. And who will count their number? Their number is legion: there are legions of them who are shining with virtue and mighty intercession. Oh, how I wish I could be one of them; how I wish I could share in their ever-watchful vigilance, and in their ever-keen scrupulousness!

I want to raise my ideal, to put myself under more imperative restrictions; and if suffering, the blessed daughter of Calvary, comes towards me, I will fling myself courageously into her arms reddened with the blood that maketh Saints.

My Infirmities

Ecce quem amas infirmatur—"*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*" (John xi).

There was at Bethany a poor sick man named Lazarus; and his sisters Martha and Mary sent this short message to the Saviour: "Behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick"—*Ecce quem amas infirmatur!*

What adorable respect, what delicacy of supplication, what supreme self-abandonment!—O Jesus, Thou art so great: they dare not say to Thee: "Come!" And is there any need for them to say so, O loving Jesus?

"There was a certain sick man." Oh, that is just myself: I can scarcely move, I

pray badly, I do nothing that is any good ; there is a general languor in my thoughts and aspirations and intentions. Oh, when one is so weak, might one not die ?

All around me and up in heaven there are holy and loving beings interested in watching over me. I feel that they are grieved and disturbed : I hear them murmur the urgent and timid message : " Behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick !"

Can it be of me that these friendly voices are speaking ? Is there some devout soul, some Saint, perhaps, who is trying, O Jesus, to draw Thy attention towards me ; and is the name they give me a true one ?

" *He whom Thou lovest !*" Hast Thou, indeed, a little of the love that is kept for and bestowed upon the sufferer to accord to one who is worthless and without generosity, and who is, alas ! selfish and ungrateful !

" *He whom Thou lovest !*" These glowing words revive feelings which I thought were dead. O Jesus, in the indifference of my life and the coldness of my prayers, if all seems to show that I love Thee hardly at all, why dost Thou not hear now my heart exclaim with that of St. Peter : " Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee !" Oh, Lord, this is indeed true of me.

Hast Thou not called me near Thee, far

nearer than many others? Didst Thou not come from afar in search of me? And I have known Thee and chosen and preferred Thee; I have promised and given Thee a little of myself; and if I have received so much from Thee, and if Thou comest so often into me by Holy Communion, it must be because Thou lovest me!

If Thou lovest me, look upon me; see how ill I am: ill from my repeated sins, ill from my vain desires and reveries. Oh, let me tell Thee so in the sincerity of my grief, in spite of all appearances to the contrary: I am sick above all from Thy absence; I have such a yearning for Thee that nothing can take Thy place!

And now, in the shining of a light from on high, in the silence shut off from all the vain noises of earth, I hear words that thrill me through: "*I will go and heal him.*"

O come, that I may find Thee! O heal me, that I may follow Thee!

Incurable Misery

Omnis homo mendax—"*Every man is a liar*" (Ps. cxv).

A disciple from Galilee who has become a follower of Jesus—a holy woman who has left her home to wait upon Him wherever He goes—a sinner converted from her sinful

life—such, for instance, were St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. John, Mary Salome, Mary Magdalene, etc.

Try to think of them as being mainly taken up with their own self-interest, as reflecting with self-satisfaction and at length on their own moral qualities or physical advantages, endeavouring to show them off —and all this when in the company of Jesus —attempting to enter into relationships for pleasure or for honour independently of their gentle Master, and perhaps against His will! Such an idea is abhorrent to you; yet see if such is not the story of your life: a mixture of love and empty selfishness, of sincere protestation and strange falling away. —Did not the Apostles themselves, on the eve of the Passion, quarrel amongst themselves? And there, close to their Friend, who was next day to humble Himself to be the least of mankind, they were disputing as to who should be the greatest!

And yet, later on, when their eyes were finally opened by the successive vicissitudes of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and of Pentecost, how covered with confusion they must have been on looking back; and from this confusion what a reaction and what an uplifting there must have been!

And as for me, to whom Jesus has revealed and entrusted Himself, whom He calls by the sweetest names of friendship,

whom He has so often raised up and forgiven, shall I not feel arise within me the conquering impulses that urged on the Apostles to the highest devotion? Oh, to follow Him, and to partake of His humiliations and sufferings!—to console and magnify Him, and make Him loved!—to forget and lose myself in the desire to be His!—to rest and feed, in order to get the strength to follow Him to-morrow!—to learn, in order to be better able to speak of Him!—to grow better, in order that those about me may see something of Him in me, and that He may look upon me with more satisfaction!

Beneath His loving eyes, I feel a peaceful joy; I feel, indeed, that I am living for Him. My fancies and reveries and selfish desires fly far away like shadows. And to think that in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, somebody's praise or blame, or their mere look, or the ever-recurring desire for life and enjoyment which is in me, will fill me with discontent or yearning again, and will hide from my eyes the figure of Jesus, who nevertheless is ever looking upon me! And I shall begin to think only of myself!—No, indeed, this would be an unworthy thing! I will watch and pray.

The Sepulchre of Selfishness

Lazare, veni foras—"*Lazarus, come forth*" (John xi).

Why do you bury your head in your hands, and withdraw into yourself? You suffer, and look upon your own sufferings. Your shoulders are oppressed with a burden that you are bearing by yourself; for around you, no one marks your tears, and your tears for yourself receive no consolation from heaven.

Your nature is getting confined in that subtle egoism for which you take no blame to yourself; and it is losing its fineness, its ardour and its strength; in proportion as you become wrapped up in yourself, you enter into the region of death, for life means love and action and sacrifice!

Into these silent depths of *self*, the call of other people's sorrows and needs falls too faintly to be heard. Your neighbour's soul, which is perhaps linked with yours, remains too far from God, and you let years go by, and favourable moments, too, without giving it a thought! You only feel your own troubles, and the errors and worries brought on by your own action.

And yet you might let them see God in the gladness of your countenance; you might be kind to them, and get them to listen to the words of salvation!

You suffer, you say, because you are sensitive, extraordinarily sensitive! Know, then, that deep in such persons the most miserable egoism springs up. Sensitiveness and kindness are not synonymous; over-sensitiveness easily leads anyone to become wrapped up in self; kindness takes him out of himself, and makes him ready to help.—Do you like talking to people about themselves, encouraging them, thanking them, sympathizing with them and consoling them?—To do this advantageously, not only endeavour, but also aptitude is needed: and this aptitude only comes from being set free from one's self.

Excessive anxiety about one's self is a thick fog which isolates anyone in a cold shadow; and in it, evil is only imperfectly distinguished. Certainly, you will rebuke any grave sins; but you will not observe negligences, aversions, and evil inward commotions which only require a tacit consent to get a footing.—Do you not sometimes, in your lamentable self-deception, bring even to the Holy Table such a tangle of personal worries that you receive Jesus without being aware of His presence, and without saying anything to Him? And are not these engrossing cares often the wounds of self-love, imaginary wrongs, and always mere transitory troubles? But they are your own troubles, and they exhaust your capacity for feeling.

O thou who belongest to God, and who servest and lovest H m, come forth from this tomb, which is thyself; rise with the dawn of a new life; tear off the bandages that bind thy limbs; draw thy breath; open thine eyes and see; there are before thee fair things to be loved, and there is good to be done; there is an entire life of union with God and of devotion to thy fellows that calls for thee; and lastly, hear My voice, which comes across the ages to cry out to thee: "O poor soul, buried in thyself, come forth from the tomb!"

WHAT KEEPS US AWAY FROM JESUS

Abneget semetipsum—"Let him deny himself."

O my child, I do not condemn what leaves thee free to love Me. Keep the calm affections, which, as God, I have implanted in man's nature. To every duty I have assigned its joy. Take duty with its joy. But if it come sometimes alone, look deeper: I am with it; wilt thou not take Me with My Cross?

Tell Me! can one who loves approve of what makes his beloved forget him and leave him? O my child, I am often very far from thy thoughts! How many far too elaborate pleasures dost thou seek! How many desires dost thou pay too much atten-

tion to! How many are thy imprudent amusements! How dost thou worry about thine affairs! And amidst all this agitation, what position is left for Me? What place dost thou give Me?

Yes, thou livest for thy own gratification, and this is, indeed, an evil thing; for the gratification of self is not the true end of life. In thy prayers thou often tellest Me that thou wouldst live for Me. Look at yesterday—the past week—recall to thyself such and such a bad day, a day of vanity or of childish pride; look at thy desires and disappointments; speak now; wast thou living for Me?

All these engrossing anxieties were slowly blotting out My likeness: and all these contrary tastes of thine were instinctively separating thee from Me; My love was becoming the light food that is despised; and my easy requirements a yoke too heavy to be borne.

In thy dark hours of disappointment and weariness, at such times as life seemed heavy and desolate, thou didst feel the need of returning to Me; but thou hadst left Me too far away—thou wert in despair of making thyself heard. But do not, indeed, reckon on getting tired of things to return to My love: for this kind of distaste generally only helps to deaden the heart.

Besides, what is the good of these selfish appeals? Do they mean a sincere farewell to all that grieves Me? Do not they keep some regret, some unacknowledged hopes? Dost thou wish Me to intervene amidst these affections, which are decent, but which are still the rivals of Mine? When thou openest thine arms to Me, dost thou desire Me to take in thy heart the place which is still warm with feelings that I cannot endure?

O my child, purify thine eyes, thy thoughts, and thy heart; then thine eyes shall see Me again, thy thoughts shall turn towards Me, and thy heart, like the sparrows in the Psalms, will come back to the soft nest to hatch out warm feelings that are not of this world.

The Revelation of Love

Dissimulans peccata eorum—"Thou overlookest the sins of men" (Wisd. xi).

O God, what a wonderful word! Thou wilt not regard me as guilty; Thou turnest Thine eyes away; Thou hidest my sins from Thee, my sins which would oblige Thee to diminish Thy love!

Thy love pleads extenuating circumstances with Thy heart, and Thy heart only wishes to admit them freely: Thou sayest: No, the child does not mean to be unkind towards Me, he took no thought!

A mother is seated with fixed eyes and furrowed brow, thinking and thinking: her son, yes, her own son has committed a crime; men say he is a scoundrel! And here is his mother, trying to think otherwise; she wants to love him still!—She, too, says to herself: He never knew, he never thought, he will turn again, for he is not wicked!—His failings, even his great failings, suggest a reason for indulgence to her: it is these that have carried him away; it is they that are to blame!—And these failings, to her mind, are not *h r son.*

The preparations for punishing him, the feelings of horror, of which he sees that he is the object, these do not move the criminal. He goes slowly forward, and suddenly, he sees his mother before him. All her thoughts and feelings and hopes are plain in her poor tortured face, and in her eyes that reveal no wrath against him!—Now he is kneeling down: O mother, you still love me?

O God, Thou hast created nothing without having before Thee a pattern still higher than Thy works; Thou hast, then, made a mother's heart a likeness of Thine own. Thou lovest thus, and Thou lovest even more than this!

O Jesus, who art this Heart Incarnate and fully human, Thou tearest me away from myself, and showest me that Thou lovest me

still, and that Thou lovest me enough not to distrust me, blessed be Thou!

To forgive is lovely, to sacrifice one's self is noble, but to turn away one's eyes so as not to see the sins of him one loves, this is more than lovely and noble, it is a mother's love uplifted into the divine.

Depths of love that I never suspected open before my enchanted eyes; a light, such as is unknown on earth, enables me to discern an all-embracing indulgence and tenderness such as words cannot express, so divine a masterpiece is it: a work of love steeped in tears, a means of forgiveness and uplifting, a higher reality than all our dreams; O Heart of Jesus, larger than all our thoughts of mercy, thou art broader than all our wretchedness; thy love is infinite!

How shall I rejoice, when I have to face my lesser sins, to find once more the eyes that turn aside so as not to see, the heart that seeks for an excuse to love no less than before!—O marvellous skill of my Lord! Thou revealest to man's heart so vast a love: and is not this the supreme means of conquering it, overcoming it by itself, and in God!

Jesus suffering through Us

Quid sunt plagæ istæ?—"*What are these wounds?*" (Zach. xiii).

It is written: "*I will pour out upon them the spirit of grace, and of prayers: and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son.*"

Here am I at Thy feet under the weight of my sins, O God my Father. Absolution will soon shed upon me the blood of Thy Son; now is the time: pour out upon me Thy spirit, who unfolds to me the meaning of Jesus crucified. May I raise to Calvary eyes that see, a heart that feels! I would fain groan and weep: weep for Jesus, "*as one weepeth for an only son.*" What repentance, what grace, what purification, what renewal! How beautiful would it be! O Lord, how just would it be!

"*And in that day there shall be a long lamentation, and there shall be a fountain open for the washing of the unclean, and of the sinner.*"—This long lamentation, O Jesus, was Thine at Gethsemani, before Pontius Pilate, and at Calvary, and during all Thine agonies. So mighty was it that it seemed to break Thy Father's heart to make it pour forth streams of divine mercy. Will not my heart understand this, and will not it also

break to let my repentance flow to assuage Thy grief?

"What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands?" in the hands so often kissed by the love of Mary, and bathed in the tears of the Magdalene? In these hands so gentle to little children, and so helpful to the suffering? And who is it that has so pierced them through and through with wounds?

"With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me!" At this unexpected revelation my heart is wrung: it is indeed of me that Jesus speaks. Now I see the cruelty of my sins: wounds made in the house of them that loved Him—wounds in the hands and feet, which of themselves are not enough to slay,—is not this the work of my venial sins?

My sins of yesterday, like those of past years, by a divine and dreadful privilege, anticipated time to fall upon Jesus. From the Crib to Calvary, they were ever under His eyes; they fastened themselves upon His ever-bleeding heart. When He was at work, and even when He was smiling, Jesus *felt each one* of my venial sins!—Nothing can prevent this from being true, neither my wonder, nor my ignorance. Am I not to be keenly sorry for it, because Jesus is no longer the man of sorrows and because He is in heaven?

O Jesus, I know that even in heaven Thou keepest the wounds of Calvary; and my fresh sins seem to open them anew, for they evoke in Thee the same feelings of reprobation and displeasure. Nay, more, the horror Thou feelest for them is only the more intense, because their moral deformity contrasts more sharply with the radiant purity and ideal beauty that surround Thee.

Indeed, it is true that these wounds no longer bleed as they once bled, and was it not my fault? Jesus, who was scourged and crucified oversteps the ages in His foreknowledge; it is then strictly true to say that every sin affects Him, and that every repentance brings Him consolation.

I have seen Him pass on His way up the hill of Calvary, and His eyes were filled with tears, and His brow dripped with blood, for His royal forehead wore a crown of thorns. An infinite desolation rested upon His lips and eyelids, and weighed upon all His bruised body.

I saw Him pass, and His looks fell upon mine, and His eyes revealed the utmost depths of His soul, and there I read as in an open book, each one of my sins represented by a sorrow.—I saw Him pass by and suffer, I saw Him bleeding for my sins, and I uttered a few set phrases of sorrow—and then I went away to look for some dangerous pleasure,

some vain satisfaction! I forgot all the tears I had shed! How could it be? What inconsistency and unfathomable levity of heart! How am I humiliated! O venial sins, your name shows that you are sins that God forgives, but my heart will not forgive you, because you end in covering me with hateful ingratitude!

The Need of God

Ad quem ibimus?—"To whom shall we go?" (John iv).

Amidst the agitation of life, and in certain times of solitude, when I am free to look all around me and survey all the horizons of this world below, I experience the desolate sense of a dying autumn filled with dead leaves. How many fallen hopes, what destruction and emptiness I see around me!—A long cold shudder runs through benumbed nature; a swarthy night seems to cover it in a winding-sheet; and, to give a tongue to all these dumb despairs, the wind groans on all sides.

It is the evening of some disappointment, of some felt trouble; it is the evening of a tiresome and weary day. It is one of the long, slow hours of sickness. It is the great black cloud of some heavy fear; it is merely the woe of existence, the torment of vague and ever-hungry yearnings; it is the feeling of exile.

What, if I had no God!

I look round me for affections to console me ; I so much want to find rest in my weary uneasiness ; I so much want to assuage my sorrow ; and I look for a harp to re-echo with its music the heart-rending notes that arise within me.

Amidst the crowd of the indifferent who chill me, I seek those I love ; I find and see them ; but they, too, are all taken up with their own life and troubles and pleasures. Each of them is himself a centre to which some secret power brings back everything ; it is the law, the hard law of human personality.

What, if I had no God !

They come at my call with outstretched hands and with a kindly smile on their lips. "What is the matter ? What can I do ? You are in trouble ? Oh, tell me what it is." —And while I pour out my woes, I remark that my friend's expression grows more and more vague : he is there, but his heart is far away ! When we talk of ourselves, we are always too lengthy ! He who listens to me and loves me has left me without meaning to, carried away by his own cares. And often, if he listens and speaks to me, if, indeed, he stays on, it is duty that keeps him there. Oh, when consolation becomes a duty !

What, if I had no God !

When one has breathed the breath of eternal hopes, in so pure an air, under so blue a sky; when, beneath the great trees of the forest, as beneath the arches of a church, one has found with delight the one and unchanging God, and has called Him by the name of Father; when, above all, one has felt in hours of fervour, embracing arms, arms that were not human, could one venture to say: What, if I had no God!

But what my hands touch falls away; what my eyes see soon vanishes and leaves only the void behind; what I pursue ceases to satisfy me as soon as I attain it, and if I have once enjoyed it, I can enjoy it no longer: all is essentially transitory, inadequate, and deceptive, because everything is made out of nothing!—And shall I dare, O God, to prefer these things to Thee? Shall I try to live on what cannot support me? Shall I beg for what is denied me? Shall I offend Thee at the risk of losing Thee, and with the certainty of lessening my hold upon Thee?

If I had Thee not, O my God, to whom should I go?—No, like the Apostles, I will stay with Jesus, with detachment and generosity and self-sacrifice, and I will abide in His sweet intimacy.

The Word that Transforms

Sed tantum dic verbo—"But only say the word" (Matt. viii).

Man's word expresses, but does not create. O Jesus, Thy word has creative power. Thou sayest to the leper: "I will; be thou clean": and the leprosy disappears.—O Jesus, pity the deformities of my soul: blot them out: I so much desire to please Thee!

Thou didst see the poor helpless paralytic, and saidst to him: "Arise and walk!" Oh, what joy to feel at last one's power over one's limbs, and strength to move and live!—O Jesus, pity the helplessness that paralyses my desires and aspirations, and my whole life; say to me, too: Arise and walk! I want so much to go to Thee!

Matthew, leaning over his accounts, thinks only of the profit he will make. Thou passest by, O Jesus, and sayest: "Follow Me!" and he leaves everything.—O Jesus, bid me leave whatever keeps me away from Thee: eagerness about the goods of this world, personal anxieties, and habits I cannot break off.—O Jesus, say to me, too, the word I so much desire to hear: Follow Me; fill it with such love as may finally detach me from all the futilities that crowd my life: I so much want to live on Thee!

O Jesus, one evening Thou didst tread

under foot the waters of the Sea of Galilee; the Apostles in their ship were sailing close by; night was falling. In the silence, Thy voice rose sweet and strong: "Peter, come to Me"; and Peter in obedience ventured on the deep and walked on the waters. But soon he was seized with fear, as if Thy word were either impotent or deceptive!—O Jesus, when Thou biddest me do a difficult work; when Thou settest before me some virtue that is beyond my strength, why should I be afraid? Thou callest me; Thou art there; I am going to Thee!

O Jesus, let Thy sweet word of forgiveness descend upon me: "Thy sins are forgiven." Merely utter my name with the sweet voice that thrilled the Magdalene at the empty tomb. My name on Thy lips, Thy voice sinking deep into my heart, what joy is this!

O Jesus, speak to God for me in prayer; art Thou not the eternal and infinite word that expresses the fulness of Thy Father? The Word is Thy name, and the Word is Thy part; give expression to God within me.—Be the creative Word, whereby all can be made anew. Say to my dim intelligence: "Let there be light!" And then my intelligence, too, will be filled with truth, according to its powers. Bid life appear and deck my dryness of spirit, and then my heart will throb with divine life, and blossom forth in the fruitfulness of fervour.

O Jesus, give Thy priest for me the word that transforms. At Thy altar, does he not say every day: "This is My body, this is My blood"; and thus the bread and wine are changed into Thee. May this same voice, which is Thine, find me as obedient as those humble materials, and I shall no longer be the same *self*, a poor, vain, selfish and failing creature. I, too, shall become *Thee*.—O Jesus, in each of my confessions, speak one of these words: words that create and direct, words that bring me Thy love and tear away mine in return!

Encouragement to One who feels that He is always Imperfect

You make use of the means advised; you are brave enough to make your confessions according to this zealous method—and yet you do not advance in perfection as rapidly as you wish; you keep falling into the same sins; your defects are also acutely felt, and sometimes show a recrudescence that disconcerts you.—Why do you meet with these sins and imperfections, persistent defects and perpetual relapses?

1. First of all, be just to yourself and compare yourself with what you were before you began your efforts. Are not your sins fewer and less voluntary? Do you not feel regret for them more quickly? Have you not a

greater shrinking from them? Then, indeed you have gained ground, if you feel some of these improvements.—As to your defects, is it not true that you remark them more easily? And that is just why you think that they have more vitality.—Is it not also true that they displease you more? And perhaps this is what provokes you to discouragement and depression. But if one notes defects more easily, and dislikes them more, they are on the way towards cure!

2. Merely from a rational point of view, an attentive study of the human soul shows that here, as in the case of bodily health, and as in material things, progress is a work of time. Goodness is too high a thing to depend on mere wishing and a few efforts; it is something which God gives us to create, and it has, like the creation of a world, slow periods of evolution, in which progress is made by insensible degrees.

3. Besides, do we not carry with us the corrupted nature which is of the essence of our fallen state? St. Paul felt its recurrent assaults. Are we more nobly endued than the great Apostle, and have we got to our credit the same sacrifices, the same mortifications, the same vigilance and the same ardour? The angel of Satan buffets him; his desires seem to get the better of his resolutions, and he cries out: O wretched man that I am!—But see how he soon lifts

up his head, and on his brow are the bright serenity of the seer and the boldness of the victor, and he cries out manfully: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me; my goodness shall be God's work, and however high this goodness may be, it wins its increase amidst human infirmity."

4. And indeed, how necessary are these imperfections, sins, and feelings of our own defectiveness? They are necessary for God, since they assure Him of glory—and they are necessary for our goodness, since they assure it of solidity.

No doubt we may conceive of a being who is absolutely perfect and yet humble; but this being is not fallen man. Since in goodness he sees too little of God's part, for the invincible action of divine grace escapes his attention; since he sees too much of himself, at least so far as his personal efforts are concerned, he is liable to *attribute to himself* his resistance of evil, his progress and even perfection itself.—Self-*satisfaction*, when more or less swayed by such a persuasion, is so easy!—To *direct* the attention and esteem of others to one's self is so tempting! Here is the pride which brings trouble both within and without, and which disorganizes the moral life.

In His adorable wisdom, God purposely leaves us these miseries which we deplore; He uses them as the miraculous mud with

which He opened the eyes of the blind ; and the blind man, when healed, distinguished by the light of truth what was God's and what was his own. The division is easily made : it leaves man nothing but what is evil.

Instead of being depressed, lift up your hopes. Out of your great wretchedness, make the great virtue which restores everything, *humility ;* make *humiliating confessions,* according to the advice we give elsewhere ;* take a bath of humiliation ; you will come from it cleansed and refreshed. Have you ever thought of absolution being made of the humiliations of Jesus as well as His blood ?

If you are quite humble, you will have a true idea of *confidence,* you will be reassured and calm, and bold if required ; but you will be this without reckoning too much on yourself. Confidence means trusting in God.

Oh, how little does God suffice us when the wind blows and the waves rise !

If you are quite humble, you will easily be *charitable,* indulgent, gentle and patient ; you will love as you feel that you are loved by God, with His broad and tireless tolerance.

If you are quite humble, you will feel the *need of prayer.* You feel yourself poor, impotent, and, behold, you are allowed to ask

* See Vol. I, p. 84, 85.

for everything and to have everything! If you are quite humble, you will find in prayer all things supernatural: grace, the instrument of progress, belonging to God; prayer, the means of obtaining it, put into your hands; and by this means, goodness, the work of God and man, giving Him the glory, and man the merit.

If you are quite humble and know that you are loved, you will enter ever deeper into the secrets of divine love; you will wonder and admire; you will learn that infinite Goodness, considering your sins, is called *Mercy*, and that bending over you, God's child, it is called *Fatherhood*.

We might go through all the virtues and generosities and noble feelings one after another; and we should remark with wonder and delight that all these high things owe their force, their brightness and their solidity to humility, in which they have their roots.

And we should cry out upon our relapses, however involuntary, and the defects that we detest! But they are such a source of help that they may well be called, in the language of the Church: "Happy faults."

NOTE.—See the *Introduction to a Devout Life*: "On the love of self-humiliation."—In the same order of ideas, read farther on (p. 112): *The prayer of hope.*

FIRM PURPOSE

I. When you know well what your evil is and when you deplore it, it seems as if you might stop there, as if the evil were cured because it is known and deplored! What would be said of a doctor who was satisfied to diagnose a malady without prescribing any *treatment?*

Now you have to decide upon a treatment. Materials for it are to be found in that part of the book entitled: *Reform.* Read what corresponds with your needs; for want of effort: *Will* (p. 162). For self-seeking and drifting into bad tendencies, see: *Order* (p. 192). For eagerness, uneasiness, depression which disturbs, and for scrupulosity: *Submission* (p. 228).

If you are arrested by no striking defect, or if you feel inclined towards Him, go to Jesus, who is the first principle of all reformation, since He is the *pattern,* and *life* and *love.*

(See: *Self-Reform through Jesus,* p. 371.)

II. After reading, recollect yourself and pray: then, in God's name, determine on some clear and effective resolution.

The table at the end of the volume is a great help for obtaining a clear decision.—You will do well to fill in one like it each time, or at any rate, during your monthly retreat.

AT THE CONFESSIONAL

The *Confiteor* may be recited before going in, if there are many waiting. In the latter case, after saying : *" Bless me, Father, for I have sinned,"* you begin thus : *" At my last confession, on such a date, I promised to keep watch over myself as to* SUCH AND SUCH A POINT, *and to employ* SUCH AND SUCH MEANS . . . *there has been some improvement in this and a falling off in that. I attribute it to* SUCH AND SUCH A CAUSE. Give details.

Then accuse yourself of your sins, a limited number, and with few explanations ; then add : *I also accuse myself of all the sins I have forgotten, of all those of my past life, and especially of those of such and such a nature.*

Then you submit to your confessor the special *resolution* you have taken, and the *means* you have decided upon.—Receive his advice with trustful obedience.

N.B.—Make no interruptions—do not try to recall what you *feel* you have forgotten—the important thing is to listen to God who speaks through the priest.—Light, which is a supernatural gift, is found in being in harmony, not with the exhortations given, but with the dispositions with which they should be welcomed.

At the absolution, hear Jesus Christ Himself saying to you : *Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace and love more !*

NOTE.—Here, as in many other passages, it is easy to distinguish what is obligatory from what is only of counsel.

AFTER CONFESSION

I. Discard all anxiety, let *joy* and *gratitude* prevail.

II. Renew your resolutions.—A very filial way of making them more definite and deeper felt is to repeat them *explicitly* to Our Lord, getting as close as possible to the tabernacle for the purpose.—Before going away, bow your head and ask Him to give you His blessing.

III. It is a good thing to say your penance as soon as possible.—Sacramental penance is always of obligation, and binds as a debt; hence all those that have been postponed must be fulfilled, even if they go back several confessions.

At Mary's Feet

I have found my heart, and I have recovered my joy! O Mother of Jesus, how good is your Son!—I went to Him rather discouraged, discontented with myself, and with a lack of pliancy, asking myself what could He make of so craven a nonentity—I brought Him no smile: I did not feel His presence, and His face seemed veiled!—No doubt I regretted my sins, but I knew not what to say to Him.—How one suffers when one really loves, thou, O Mother, knowest well!

One day thou didst lose Him in Jerusalem, dost thou remember? Without Him, there seemed to be no life on earth and no light in heaven.—And thou didst seek Him with all the aids that anguish could suggest—and didst not find Him.—And the long nights seemed endless. Every day fell on thy heart like a fresh proof of thy misfortune; every hour seemed to carry still farther away Him whom thou wert seeking in vain!

Thou madest against thyself many a reproach, thou didst form many plans of what thou wouldst do in the future. Indeed, thou wast saying, "I will never leave Him again; at any rate, my eyes shall follow Him everywhere; and if He means to ascend the hill of Calvary, no matter, I will even go with Him there."—O Mother, like thee, I have searched and suffered and made promises!

And then, God gave Him back to thee!—It was in His temple, near the altars where prayer rises with the incense; near the altars where Redemption flows with the victim's blood, that God caused thee to find Him again!—As for me, I, too, love this tabernacle, the altar of incense whence my prayers ascend; I love this confessional, where forgiveness comes to me!

My joy does not equal thine; joy is the rising tide of love, and thy love is vast as the sea!—O help me to love more! I allow my

heart to slumber too much ; I do not sufficiently guard it against the thousand trifles that engross it ; and also, when I am at Jesus' feet, my heart is only conscious of itself owing to the depression which takes possession of it, because I love so little !

Thou who didst lose Him, O Mother, thou knowest how to find Him again.—Oh, give me the intensity of will, and the courage which nothing daunts ; the constancy that is repelled by no check, and the perseverance that has the promise of success.

What a grand life would it be, if I were to go through all the ways of the world looking for Jesus !—If I were to look for Him in all creatures . . . everywhere If I were not to stop anywhere . . . to enjoy myself ; —scanning the horizon, when it was daylight ;—crying out with plaintive voice, when it was night !

But when Jesus was found, He followed thee obediently ; and obedient He remained, overcome by thy love.—What a lesson ! What hope for me !

APPENDIX I

An Examination or Summary of Christian Morals considered Devotionally

Lists of questions are helps, but weak helps. Their first defect is that they do not quite apply to anybody. What a variety of enumeration would be required for *every soul* to find in it what suits her ; and amidst what a heap of strange things would she not have to make a fastidious search ?

The confession of one's sins, made according to a list of questions, is a *factitious* and *borrowed* work, and is necessarily narrow and *formal*. Anyone who cannot shake himself free of it in order to be himself ends by becoming a *conventional personality*, the only one he shows in the confessional, and the only one he even knows himself *when he is there*.— Elsewhere, it is quite otherwise : he speaks of himself and his feelings quite genuinely.

1. *To discover one's sins one's self* is the ideal to realize ; but, to succeed in doing this, two rather rare conditions are required : *knowing one's duty*, and *being able to reflect*.

But the knowledge of one's duties is usually *vague*, and reflection is *without method*, and this is the misfortune. You scatter your attention over a very wide field, in which

nothing can be clearly made out, and you say: "I see nothing!" Then you take refuge in accusations *without any real bearing*, like: distractions in my prayers, feelings of impatience; you take no trouble to say whether these things were voluntary, frequent, or induced by causes that you might have avoided, and so on.

2. To set forth duties, and show their relations with *the order of things*, is to bring out any sin into a clear light and to enable one to see the degree of its gravity.

Besides, evil is negative and can only be known from the good to which it is opposed. The nomenclature of what is evil provides neither enlightenment nor encouragement. On the contrary, there is such a correspondence between the soul and the good, that merely to set forth the good seizes and attracts the soul.

It is a work of this kind, brief and substantial, that we propose to attempt under the head of *a suggestive examination*. It will be a help; and, perhaps, a means of training.

I.—Our Duties towards God

1. Duties towards God are the *foundation* of all the others, for they determine and sustain the rest.

2. They establish us in *rectitude*, and direct us towards our true end.

3. They *gladden* and *console* us as soon as we come to love them, and *make us perfect*, if we are faithful to them. On all of these grounds, is it not right to devote to them a substantial amplification ?

I.—THE DUTY OF SUBMISSION

I must submit my will to God's will, because God is *absolutely my Master*. It is He who has given me my being, the faculties which constitute it, and the goods I possess. All of this depends upon Him every moment : therefore, to *obey* all He orders me, and to *resign myself* to any trouble He sends me, is my first duty.

In what He orders, God has only the good *order of things* in view ; in what He does, He has only the *ultimate good* in view.—He has placed *my good* in submission to these two kinds of will. If I were to try to withdraw myself from submission, I should be *going against* the good order of things, against the final good, and against my own good ; I should be introducing *disturbance* within me and around me.

1. I should be blameworthy, if I fulfilled God's commandments, as it were, regretfully and by constraint ;—if I were to wish that such and such a thing were not forbidden or required.

2. I should be unjust and unreasonable, if I were to murmur under misfortune ; if I thought it was too much, if I allowed myself to become embittered or despondent.

3. I should be inconsistent, if I refused to *recognize* the will of God in events which are His ordinance, and especially in evils happening to me from man's wickedness, as if God had no right to let them occur, or were not skilful enough to make them contribute to His ends.

Conclusion.—A frank readiness to obey.—Trustful submission to the teaching of the Church and to her orders, given by the Pope, and by the Bishops and Pastors.—Faithful observance of Sundays and Feasts, abstinence, etc.

II.—THE DUTY OF SUBORDINATION

I must *refer everything* to God, because He can only have created me *for Himself*.—He is the perfect and infinitely desirable Being towards whom every intelligent soul must tend.—If I could contemplate Him only for an instant, to live for Him would be a necessity !

1. I should then be blameworthy, if I

were to put myself or any other creature *before God*, if it were only in my thoughts and cares: if I were not *ready* to sacrifice for Him every possession, desire, and affection, that hindered me from going to Him.

2. I should be wanting in my duty and not free from blame, if I omitted to *offer God my actions* daily.—I must be on my guard in this respect against forgetfulness, indifference, and routine.

3. In all the circumstances of life, I must make my decisions according to what will be *most to God's glory*, whereas I am led to regard merely what I like best.

Conclusion.—Everything comes from God; everything must go back to Him.—To act for God is the highest act of His creatures: it is the eternal act of God Himself!

III.—THE DUTY OF CONFIDENCE

I must have a filial confidence in God. As a Father, he *wills*, and as God, He is *able*, to do all that is good for me.—I have His declarations and promises.—The merits of Jesus Christ make up for all the rights in which I am wanting.—We are *ordered* (not only allowed) to reckon upon God. Confidence is not only a duty, it is a need: without confidence there is no courage.

Two principles regulate this duty: 1. God wills our eternal good before all things; He

also wills our good in this world, so far as it is compatible with the other good : 2. God intends us to make use of all the means He has put into our hands, and to rely upon Him for everything in which we are wanting.

1. Let us go through the different objects of confidence, stopping at those which are of most interest to ourselves : this world's goods, health, respect, position, dear ones, resolutions, progress, forgiveness of our sins, knowledge of the will of God, faith in His love, and, if need be, in His mercy.

2. True confidence excludes *uneasiness*, which is weakening, and *over-anxiety*, the fever of which disturbs the judgement : God will provide for everything, let us lend Him our aid, and leave things to Him.—To be over-anxious about the good, is to *anticipate* God.

3. Our confidence would not be *supernatural*, if it did not allow God to afflict us in the things of this world. This explains much of the ill-regulated feeling displayed by those who are devout, but imperfect.

4. Another subject for serious reflections : to trust is to rely *upon God*, and not to require any other guarantee in order to be at peace.—If I am disturbed or depressed when *human means* are wanting, that is because my confidence was really based *upon them*, not upon God ; it was not a real confidence, but a *conclusion drawn from reason*.

5. Many persons give up their devotional

exercises, which have been wisely laid down, and that because they see no immediate result from them ; others leave off their efforts because they have relapsed into some sin, or feel that they are violently tempted : this is to lack perseverance in confidence.

6. Some think that they can always see an angry God before their eyes. Some go so far as to doubt as to their forgiveness or salvation. To allow one's self to drift along with such feelings is to misunderstand God and to break the very springs of the soul.

7. The duty of *expressing* and of *reviving* one's confidence is far too much neglected. Confidence is a source of heat, but it must be kept up. Are we careful to remind ourselves of the motives on which it rests, the admirable exhortations of the divine Master on the subject ?

Accuse yourself in confession, if you have not done this, especially at times of discouragement.

IV.—THE DUTY OF AFFECTION

" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

Few rise to a true *notion* of this love. It does not belong to the intellect ; it belongs to our transformed nature. By sanctifying grace, I participate in the nature of God, as a son participates in his father's nature ;

not in the sense that I receive all the divine nature, but in the sense that I get some of His aptitudes, and especially that of seeing Him face to face and of enjoying His own happiness. I am of His kin and family, and heir to His destiny. If I were fully conscious of these ties and of the love that forms them in my heavenly Father's heart, I should no longer be master, even here below, of my own heart!

1. The love I owe to God is a filial love, and this implies a root of disinterestedness: I must love Him for His own sake—I must spare Him all trouble—I must attach myself to His interests—adopt His views, His preferences—try to make Him happy.

2. To love Him means, no doubt, to do His will; but after all, loving is to love, *i.e.*, to use one's heart; and hence, it is the tendency of every devout soul to *unite with God*.

This union takes place in various ways, of which two of the most practical are: union of *thought*, and union of *will*.—Union of *thought* means seeking Him, enjoying Him, and speaking to Him. Sometimes the soul has yearnings towards Him; and sometimes she is permitted to hear Him in her hours of silence.—The union of *will* is more suited to those who are busy. One repeats often: "I am doing God's will!" What one likes or dislikes is welcomed just the same: while at work one remains under this influence.

3. Love produces zeal for God's interests. Am I really *grieved* on seeing Him offended? Am I inclined to try to *console* Him? What *reparation* was I able to make? Do I suffer enough at seeing Him misunderstood by those who are dear to me? To love greatly two persons who do not love one another, what a bitterness is this!

4. Have I searched my heart to see what finer *feelings* I could devote to Him? Have I tried to *express* them to Him with ardour?

V.—THE DUTY OF PRAYER AND OF WORSHIP

The first kind of prayer is the *expression* of all our duties towards God. It is through it that we make our protestations of *submission* and *dependence*, of our *confidence* and *love*.

This conception of prayer is only understood by degrees; first of all, we only think of praying for *ourselves* or for *those we love*. It is not as if this second object of prayer were not most pleasing to God,—a father loves to be asked,—and it is doubtless one of the holy devices of His love that has made Him require our petitions as a *condition* of His gifts; He knew that our needs would often bring us back to Him and force us to utter more earnest cries.

Except in the case of temptation or of serious necessity, the duty of prayer in itself

lays down nothing as to time and regularity of method ; but if we consider human nature, we see that a duty which remained indeterminate would run a great risk of soon disappearing. That is why the Church and Christian customs have introduced certain *positive* obligations as to *private prayers* and *public worship :* that, too, is why everyone who is devout lays down for himself certain rules on the subject. Let us see whether we have been faithful to them.

1. Have I kept these duties with material regularity ?

2. Have I omitted my reading with meditation, and the exercises that cost me something ? Have I done them superficially and without profit ?

3. Have I neglected the means suggested to bring my mind and heart frequently back to God ? Have I allowed myself to be engrossed by human affairs ?

4. Have I been able to find in confession a *renewal* of fervour ? Have I communicated with a suitable *preparation* and *thanksgiving ?* Did I hear Mass in a true spirit of faith ? Did I make my examination of conscience *seriously ?*

5. In my intercourse with God, and specially in my prayers, did I not think more of myself than of Him ?

II.—Duties towards Our Neighbour

Who is our neighbour? Everyone with whom circumstances bring us *into relationship*, and to whom our duties are proportioned to our *nearness*. This nearness is created by family ties, friendship, or by any office or mission, by any services given or received, and even by the most ordinary relationships.—In a very broad sense, all men have some sort of connexion with us, even if it were no more than their *potentiality* of becoming children of God, if they are not so already.

Remark that we owe to every neighbour, in various ways and degrees, these three orders of duty: *respect, justice*, and *charity*.

1. *The duty of respect.*—Respect is a very lofty sentiment: it is defined as a regard for *what is of God* in each one of us. The most miserable of mankind preserves some traces of the divine image, and all the possibilities of a greater likeness in the future.

Respect is the special *note* of the *spirit of faith*. It is this which makes us act with dignity, and which hinders us from wounding the dignity of other people. In order to keep it, we must often put aside natural views.

This feeling is unfortunately unknown in our society of to-day. The devout are liable to come under the influence of this forgetfulness, and to take up something of

the critical and offhand manners that result from it.

In the moral order, respect holds the place of the forces, which, in the physical order, keep the planets in their place in space.

2. *The duty of justice.* — Justice governs questions of interest, and questions of *strict duty;* it also includes the rights of *equity* which strict law may involuntarily disregard; and lastly, it inspires us with a *spirit of reasonableness* which hesitates to push its rights to the extreme.

The devout, too, must also strip themselves, with regard to this matter, of illusions arising from customs received, and perhaps favoured, *amongst themselves*, through the habit of being inclined to insist on their personal rights. They are sometimes reproached for being rather stiff and punctilious. (Read in the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, the chapter headed *The necessity of a just and reasonable spirit*).

3. *The duty of charity.* — There must be charity in everything and with regard to everything: it inspires in us a desire for the good of others, a desire which is all the more urgent according to our nearness to people.

It is charity which, in spite of our impressions, makes us kindly, indulgent, patient, and even generous and zealous. Malevolence, sulking, hatred, and jealousy

are contrary to it, as well as rash judgements and evil-speaking.

Charity can only exist along with a certain forgetfulness of self and a real love of God. Union with the loving Jesus causes it to produce wonders.—Charity is the *law* of Christ, and the *sign* by which His disciples are known. With higher motives than kindness, and having a greater range, it is indeed a new law. Are we not often satisfied to love those who are without the faith?

One notes too often among the devout (I do not say—the holy) an incomplete conception of charity towards our neighbour. When they have said of someone who has wronged them, "I love him for God's sake!" they think they are within the mark.—Do you really love him? If you have only a will to love him, that means being well-disposed towards him; if your heart is neither kindly nor well-disposed, it does not go forth to meet him.

Yet that is the impulse of all love, and this incentive is to be found in the intrinsic qualities of the person, or by his capacity for being seen with God's eyes.—God's point of view, indeed; we have but a dim notion of it, if it does not help us to clothe this neighbour of ours with some sort of attraction!—Take care lest the words, "I love him for God's sake," be only an empty form, and your love, a love without life.

I.—WITH REGARD TO OUR SUPERIORS

By superiors are meant parents, masters, authorities, your confessor, and the like ; in a word, all who have any right to order you. Others who have no right to our obedience, have a right to our deference : such are those much older than ourselves, and those whom their position or their talents make pre-eminent.

Respect.—See in your superiors something of the divine majesty and authority—let this be your *impression* when in their presence ; show it by your *behaviour* and speech.—Defects to avoid : *offhandedness* and *obsequiousness ;* still more, *murmuring.*

Justice.—They have a right to my obedience in proportion to their authority. As I am joined with them in a common mission, I owe them a real co-operation ; the ideal would be, to be one with them in thought and will.

They have the *grace of their position ;* hence unless there be some evidence to the contrary, I must not only obey, but obey them heartily.

If I think that I am bound in conscience to make some criticism, then I am bound in conscience to consent to their ignoring it.

Obedience is not giving way to a *reason* that explains, but to a decision that *manifests God's will.* In this respect, how wanting we

are in the spirit of faith! We demand endless explanations, and immediately go away discontented, if they are not satisfactory.

Gratitude is also an act of justice; I owe it to my superiors for the good they do me, and also for the general good they do. This last consideration is rarely borne in mind.—It is a good thing to *testify* one's gratitude; for it is both an encouragement and a bond of union.

Charity.—When we have to do with superiors, obedience is easily understood, but far less so is charity; however, do they not deserve our love, and have they no need of it?

To see Our Lord above all in their persons is a primary duty; but to see their good qualities and their usefulness *also* is another; charity *inclines* us to love them as respect does to venerate them. It makes us partake of their joys and their sorrows, desire their happiness, and take what they say and do in good part.—Why not *show* them our confidence and affection?

To *congratulate* and praise them is a more delicate business; it should be done with much prudence and without the least flattery. Charity must never go beyond the *truth*: this is a rule which is often forgotten.

It is selfishness that keeps us from thinking more of showing good-will to our superiors for all the trouble they take. It all seems so

natural that we do not notice it.—How would it be if we were in their place ?

The want of the spirit of faith is *lowering*, we obey the creature.—Our want of breadth of view hinders us from recognizing that the *quality* of our obedience (respectful, loving, trustful), involves God's glory.

An important remark : pride is the ruin of all these duties ; it makes us unjust and stifles affection.

II.—TOWARDS OUR EQUALS

Respect.—Here, respect is specially seen in *modesty* and *deference :* it forbids us to make little of, or to despise, anyone.—It inclines us to give way and to yield precedence.—Under its influence, disputes, and even reproaches, are kept within due bounds.

The best way to get respect is to show it one's self. Excessive free-and-easiness of demeanour and speech are to be avoided ; vulgarity is a kind of unconscious contempt.

Justice.—In all our dealings : a broad mind and no petty minuteness.—Do not appear too interested.—Do not insist too much on your rights.

Much harm may be done to our neighbour by speaking evil of him, even if it be true. Evil-speaking is injustice, for it is only evil-speaking, when it is *not justified.*—Make use of this highly wise rule : do not condemn or

even form a judgement, if you have *no right* to do so—do not speak any evil of your neighbour unless you are *obliged*—do not find fault with people's motives, for you *cannot know them.*

Charity—A kindly disposition.—Have I failed herein through *want of sympathy* or from *hatred?* Have I avoided *recrimination* and complaining? Do I not sometimes give harsh replies, and contradict?

Am I quick in finding words to *drive away the clouds,* and to calm temporary discord? Have I made it a rule *never to discourage,* and to try to approve? Have I kept watch over myself not to *contradict* unreasonably, and never disrespectfully?

Am I obliging and agreeable? Am I ready to put myself out to render services? Have I been kind to get praised, or at least to win good-will?—Have I taken pains that my expression and address and speech should put people at their ease? Am I one of those whose outward appearance repels or is unpleasant?

Let affability be our rule and our constant endeavour: by it we bear something of God within us!

It is perhaps with our equals that we think least of acting from a *supernatural motive.*—One loves and sacrifices one's self, but because one follows one's bent without looking any higher.—This charity, which is imperfect in

motive, is always somewhat lacking in its effects.—If you cannot like anyone for any other reason, do not let it be seen too plainly that your love is for God's sake only.

III.—TOWARDS OUR INFERIORS

Here we have to do with children and servants, and with our subordinates in general.

Respect.—This duty consists in showing regard for all our inferiors, and in not making them painfully aware of the distance between them and us.—Our inferiors here will perhaps be our superiors in heaven, and who can tell if they are not so already in God's sight? Roughness, and specially disdain, show an entire absence of the spirit of faith. "*Whatever ye shall do to one of the least of these that believe in Me, ye have done it unto Me.*" Thus it is that Jesus desires to protect and raise the humble.

Justice and responsibility.—We are all the more prone to take advantage of inferiors because we can do it with impunity. It is, doubtless, a mean thing to do, but it is such a human thing!—Capricious whims, uncalled-for requirements, thoughtless orders or counter-orders?—To impose respect for one's self and for one's orders and rules is a help to the inferiors themselves, and hence a duty; we must avoid giving orders lightly, or in an ill-timed and hasty manner.

I am bound to *supervise* and to *rebuke*. Have I been slack about it, just because it seemed too much bother? Have I made excuses for myself on the ground that I was not listened to, instead of seeing whether it was not really because I did not go about it in the right way?

Am I fully conscious of the duty of making all those who are dependent upon me *better?* What means, and what holy expedients have I used for the purpose?—Have I prevented myself from showing unjustifiable preferences, or such as were not prudent?—Do I take care to avoid any conversation that might be wrongly understood?—Do I not sometimes give a *bad example* by my outbursts, sensuality, idleness, criticisms, etc.?

Charity.—Have I constantly held in check any *bitterness* or *irritability* arising from the offences, contradictions, and especially from the opposition, of my subordinates? Have I not answered violence with violence, instead of stifling it with firm and irresistible gentleness? Have I kept up a hostile attitude towards them?

Does kindly feeling make me indulgent and *patient?* Do I possess the charity that *warms* the heart and gives encouragement? No one should go away from me discontented.

To supervise and to reprimand are duties of justice, but the *manner* of their exercise belongs to charity. Is not my superinten-

dence too obvious and restless, and rather harassing? Does it rely at all upon the odious method of espionage? Are not my rebukes too frequent? Are they not the result of a momentary impulse? If our inferiors are exasperated, it is almost always our own fault.

In my anxiety for their moral welfare, have I been oblivious of their material needs and sufferings?—Such want of heart is never an effect of grace.—On the contrary, have I been oblivious of their souls' welfare from a want of faith or from faint-heartedness?

Special duties with regard to the poor.—Help them to the best of your ability.—Never despise them, even if they are ungrateful or ill-behaved.—Never treat them harshly,—console and encourage them,—try to make them better.

Jesus willed to enter in a more sensible manner into their personality, because we naturally shrink from it. Let us always try to find His adorable likeness under their outward show of suffering or even disgrace?

III.—With Regard to Ourselves

I.—THE DUTY OF HUMILITY

This virtue *controls* and, if required, checks our tendency to *overrate* ourselves, and our wish to be put unjustly *above others*.

Humility leaves in its integrity the feeling of personal dignity, and authorizes everyone to keep his rank. It sees no harm in your seeking for approval or esteem ; but, knowing how easily we fall into excess, it counsels us to be as humble, not as we are commanded, but as we are *permitted*, to be : and this rule of perfection is also the rule of the deepest wisdom.

1. Have I this tendency to esteem myself *less*, and less to desire esteem ? Let me interrogate my sorrows and my joys—do they not often arise from self-love and according to whether it is hurt or gratified ?

Vexation with our sins is a kind of suffering pride. The virtuous get to rejoice, not in the sin, but in the humiliation it inflicts upon them.

2. Have I not been anxious to be prominent ? It makes the heart swell. Have I not put myself forward unreasonably ? Have I not upheld my opinions too energetically ? Have I not allowed myself to contradict without any need for it ?—Have I not spoken haughtily ?

3. Do my behaviour and speech really show the modest opinion I ought to hold about myself? Am I not silly enough to talk too much about myself, and of what I said and did? Am I not careful to let myself appear in the most favourable light, even if it be sometimes at the expense of strict truth? "To talk of one's self is as dangerous as walking the tight-rope," says St. Francis of Sales.

4. Have I kept watch over my *inner feelings*, in which humility ought to reign? Have I not felt a kind of sanctimonious complacency as to certain more or less vain advantages, as to praises I have received, and as to the good I could do?—*Complacency* is quite a different thing from *verification:* it is an easy exaltation and unfolding of self. —It is an empty pleasure which debilitates and corrupts.

5. Be on your guard against the devices suggested by pride—to avoid humiliation, to show one's self to the greatest advantage, or to put one's self forward.

6. Through humility wrongly understood, have I refused to accept some good that circumstances required? Have I been hesitating and timid in action?—Have I held back as soon as I felt some temptation to vain-glory? True humility allows anyone to retain all their initiative and courage; and, being free from self, they will be in the

most favourable position for undertaking to carry through great enterprises. It is for God to make use of us according to His will, and for us to lend our services without diffidence.

7. Do we deeply esteem humility, and does this feeling pervade our whole life? This virtue is the *foundation* of our duties towards God, the *rule* of our dealings with men, and the *guardian* of our moral equilibrium.

The spirit of poverty.—Poverty is to some extent the daughter of humility, and, to a large extent, its safeguard. Rich display *instinctively* causes pride; a certain sort of ostentatious expenditure puts one above others; and one's personality seems to be magnified by all one's possessions.—How have I practised poverty? Have I been glad when it has been forced upon me?

II.—THE DUTY OF TRUTH

I. *Show yourself as you are* (or *simplicity*).—This is to interpret yourself rightly, to be yourself, to be true.

It is not a question of giving our failings free play, and there is no hypocrisy in holding them in check: one would wish to get rid of them, and one restrains them as well as possible. Nevertheless, we should not have an excessive dread of letting them appear, and show such an extreme constraint in trying to

avoid them as to make us *cramped* and *uncomfortable*.

What is more pleasant than an open countenance? On the contrary, too acute an expression savours of distrust, and it prevents others from being open-hearted.—Even if, by keeping a close watch upon one's self, one could make sure of avoiding several little spontaneous mistakes, it is preferable to act and speak with ease and to take the risk. At any rate you will have exercised one virtue, simplicity.

To be affected and to put on airs is ridiculous; to weigh your words makes you tiresome.—Am I true, simple, natural, rather frank, with an agreeable spice of reserve?

II. *Say what you think* (or *sincerity*).—1. Speech is made to express thought. No doubt it is possible to say nothing; it is often a good thing to hold your peace; but, if you talk, you ought to say what you really think.

Sometimes a higher duty places you under a *temporary* obligation of allowing prudence to prevail; but it must not be misused. "More dove than serpent" is the advice of St. Francis of Sales.—With some people dissimulation, mental restrictions, and reservations, become a habit. This abuse easily creeps into certain circles: it is a peculiarity of narrow minds, and it brings discredit upon religion. Beware of it, for it is contagious!

2. Truth is opposed to flattery, which must not be confused with just praise. Flattery puffs qualities in which it does not believe; besides, it is usually inspired by personal interest.

3. One runs a risk of overstepping the truth from a desire of success (too much diplomacy), or of winning esteem (pride), and sometimes, merely from good nature (weakness).—We so much admire sincerity in others!—Are we not wanting in it ourselves, at least in small matters?

III.—THE DUTY OF PURITY

1. Let not God's work be *impaired* in your body or heart or mind.

It is not impaired by lawful use, but only by *abuse*. It is an abuse to wish for what you have no right to enjoy; and to take pleasure in vain fancies or forbidden pleasures. It is an abuse to allow yourself to be *engrossed* by human affections and lawful pleasures to such an extent as to acquire a distaste for the things of God, or merely to lose your spiritual freedom.

Therefore, you must keep watch over your *senses* and *imagination*,—you must avoid *occasions* that produce bad feelings.—Can you recognize anything of this kind in your *connexions*, *reading*, *amusements*, and *reveries*?

We do not dwell upon this delicate subject. We leave it to each individual to carry his examination of conscience as much further as is required ; but be on your guard against excessive nervousness and anxious inquiries : they give rise to temptations.

2. *Sensuality, gluttony, excessive love of comforts,* constitute gross failings which have a lowering effect ; they are a deformity as well as a degradation.

When these leanings are cherished, they develop the inferior side of our nature, or, to speak plainly, the animal part, at the expense of what is higher and purer and more refined. Contact with these gratifications awakens dangerous instincts, and their enervating action leads to falls. Your use of all such things must be most carefully controlled. But, under the influence of the spirit of faith, they may be *occasions* for a number of little mortifications, which strengthen and uplift the soul to God.

Sensuous idleness in rest and sleep belongs to the same vice and causes the same disorders. *Do-nothing* idleness, too, slackens the energies of the will ; but it also delivers it over to all the evil tendencies of our nature. It is an ill-defined plot in which Satan makes it his business to scatter his evil seed.

IV.—THE DUTY OF DISINTERESTEDNESS

The devout are often blamed for being too close ; and it is, indeed, a weakness which is developed by the practice of reflection ; and if you do not fight against it, it contracts the heart and fills the mind with mean anxieties.

1. The wish to acquire, the fear of losing what you have, and extreme care in keeping it, are manifestations of this weakness.

2. Disinterestedness does not forbid you to be reasonably careful of your interests, but it sets you free from worry and vexation. It also urges you to be rather free and liberal, not only to the poor, but also to all kinds of people.

3. Sometimes a devout person, in giving, appears as if he were driving a bargain with Heaven ; he thinks above all of the merits he secures, without perceiving that, even here, he is subject to his love of acquisition. This failing makes his virtue narrow, and his charity has no warmth.

4. Disinterestedness extends beyond questions of material interest. Under its influence, you will take pains, you will devote your time, you will even incur risks, for the good of others ; and all this, without calculating what you will get by it, and without being discouraged if you meet with ingratitude. A disinterested person is induced

to take a line of conduct by the thought of the *good in itself*, and not by the thought of *his own good*; and one who is loving is ready to serve God *at all costs*.

5. Selfishness is the opposite of this virtue; then it is that we are engrossed by *self*, which makes us unconsciously heedless of the interests and needs of others. To appreciate highly what we do for others and little what they do for us, this is the commonest form of this defect.

V.—THE DUTY OF SELF-CONTROL

Here we have especially to do with *impressions* received within, and with *vehemence* stirred up from outside.

1. *Control of one's impressions.*—To be under the control of one's impressions is to lose one's liberty. You pass without the least reason from joy to sadness, and from hope to discouragement;—you are changeable in your resolutions, in your work, and even in your friendships;—you are especially so in your temper.—This is not self-control; it is being the plaything of circumstances.

Am I bold enough to *make an effort* to keep my impressions under control?—Am I prudent enough to *keep at a distance* the thoughts, memories, and intercourse that revive them?—Have I formed the holy habit of placing myself for a few moments at

the viewpoint of eternity, thence to consider what is disturbing me ?

Is there not, it may be, a deal of whim in my decisions ?—Is there not a great want of continuity, and consequently, a deal of impotence and worry ?—I make a good resolution ; then, under some unfavourable impression, I give it up.—If my liking is engaged, all goes splendidly : but if I am seized with dislike, I think it is all up !

One should be guided by *reason*, not by *impressions*. Nothing is fundamentally changed when our impressions alone are changed : *we ourselves* are to be identified with our deliberate wills.

2. *Control of one's vehemence.*—Vehemence causes us to speak and act *on impulse*, and therefore, without deliberation ; it is scarcely a human action, and it is not at all a reasonable one.

Vehemence often does harm, and easily commits an injustice. It makes us compromise ourselves and everything that we are entrusted with. It constantly obliges us to make reparation for mistakes and offences.

This defect is not incompatible with devotion, but it disturbs and spoils it.

In order to subdue it, have I taken one of the following means : obliging myself to *speak* more *slowly* and in a lower key—wearing as *calm* an *expression* as possible in my daily life ?

VI.—THE DUTY OF PRUDENCE

Prudence requires clear *ideas*, apt *means*, and skilful *execution*. These things do not depend altogether on ourselves. What does depend upon us is to put them in the *best conditions* for action; and then, to furnish them with that in which they are *wanting*.

1. Do we oblige ourselves to enquire by *reflection?*
2. Do we like to take *counsel?*
3. Do we have recourse to *prayer?*
4. Do we allow enough for the *work of time*, instead of hurrying in a blundering fashion?

Prudence is the ruling virtue; it necessarily regulates all our activities. In our examination of conscience, we rarely bear in mind this special virtue, and do not often accuse ourselves of falling short as to this kind of obligation. There are many who would reap much advantage from making this the subject of their particular examen.

VII.—THE DUTY OF PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT

1. We all know the parable of the talents which each one is bound to turn to the best account; we have, therefore, the duty of developing our good qualities and of turning our gifts to advantage. All of them co-operate towards the good, at least, as in-

struments ; several constitute the good itself, that is to say, virtue. In the fulfilment of this virtue, *activity* is the indispensable condition ; *idleness* neglects opportunities or declines to make efforts ; it yields no fruit, and ends by letting the best of talents become useless.—Do I take care to work energetically ? usefully ? constantly ?

2. *Moral* improvement demands an ideal in the mind and a great love of good in the heart : and hence, a passion for all noble causes, for all fine actions, and for every kind of sacrifice.

There are certain qualities which make up a kind of moral nobleness : greatness of soul, liberality, courage. If we admire them, we shall have an instinctive shrinking from all that is base, and we shall not be capable of bargaining with duty.

To feel God's life within, to contemplate the ideal of perfection in Jesus : this is what still heightens the beauty of the moral ideal !

3. *Intellectual* improvement is not to be despised on the ground that it is not virtue ; it serves, raises and honours virtue.—Are we fond enough of what does this : of reading, reflection, and serious conversation ? Are we not too ready to put up with a purely material existence ?

4. Then, there is *social* improvement, which it is unwise to overlook. First of all, there is *good breeding*, which maintains

kindly relationships and puts charity on a higher level. It is the *talent of being agreeable* to others ; the arts, properly so called, like the art of music, are an excellent means to it.—Then there is the valuable knack of being able to *tell a good* story ; and the still more appreciated gift of being a good listener, and of being able to make others talk. Are we really desirous of cultivating ourselves in this way ?

A devout person would thus be placed in a better position and more liked ; he will be better able to turn his virtue to good account ; he will give people a higher idea of religion, and some may be led to get a liking for piety. Are we bold enough to face the efforts and sacrifices required for this duty ?

APPENDIX II

Motives and Incentives of Contrition

I.—CONTRITION, A MEANS OF REACTION

Contrition is usually considered as a reparation made to God for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness; but the fact is too much overlooked that it should also be a spiritual *reaction*, helping one to throw off hurtful tendencies and to regain one's spiritual vigour.

If the spiritual life is to exercise such a reaction, it must have grace; but grace is obtained above all by prayer. On the other hand, grace relies on our co-operation, which involves the combined action of our reason, feelings and will.

1. *Prayer* must precede and accompany all our efforts. The more earnest, humble, and filial it is, the more creative will be its power. We rarely pray enough.

2. *Reason* seeks for truth. Truth produces *conviction*. Conviction has such power over us as to sway us without any compulsion; and, if it does not always lead us to make the necessary resolutions, it at any rate leaves us with a clear and persistent impression of the wrong we have done.

In the case of contrition, truth is the plain

recognition of sin. A thorough knowledge of sin is also rare.

3. By *feeling*, we here mean all that moves one to regret ; all that arouses hope or fear ; all that brings into play our dignity, thankfulness, and love. The impression it creates in us with regard to evil is a sense of *repulsion.*

As we have observed elsewhere, the truths that act upon the reason are called *motives ;* those that act upon the feelings are *incentives.*—Many of the devout are prone to neglect the motives that act upon the reason. Such considerations seem to leave them indifferent, because they are not moved by them, and their one care is to attain a *sensible* impression. They forget that rational motives produce conviction, and that without conviction feeling has no foundation ; if it creates an illusory regret or a transitory yearning, it does not effect a radical change.

" Not everyone that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Conviction and impression, far from being enemies, ought to be allies ; both act upon the will : the former enlightens it, the latter kindles it. We must add that, at certain times, we are incapable of any sensible impression, but never of obtaining a serious conviction.

II.—THE USE OF MEANS OF REACTION

No doubt regret has evil as its subject-matter; but, since it proceeds from *myself*, I must not only get a thorough comprehension of what is wrong, but especially of myself; I must come to know whatever in me is most open, most easily reached, most capable of being touched, and strongest to react.

Such and such a class of motives, though excellent in itself, will not produce regret, because it is not in harmony with our nature, with the thoughts and feelings in which we have lived, in a word, with our whole moral being such as it is by inheritance, training, and environment.

1. In some people, it is the reason that is the determining force; in others, it is honour. In this person, the heart speaks loudest; in another, conscience. Fear, hope, or the sense of responsibility, are dominant in different individuals. When we look at people's circumstances, at the variety of motives from which they act, do we not say that we must take one person in this way and another in that?

2. Nor is it only individuals who differ from each other; the same person is apt to alter in many ways. Age and experience bring fresh ways of looking at things and changed feelings. A season of fervour or of

relapse will entirely vary the influence of the same motive. Our feelings are not alike every day; contradiction or indisposition or a mere trifle will make us indifferent or sensitive.

3. We are so made that changeableness is one of the conditions of our activity. The most powerful thoughts lose their persuasive effect from staleness. Variety is seen in our attitude towards the same matter; it is enough for a change to occur in our point of view.

We must, however, be on our guard against binding ourselves, as a matter of principle, to make changes which are merely advantageous; and particularly must we take care not to run through a vast quantity of motives at each confession. Yet we may have recourse to them more freely, during our monthly retreat, in order to prepare for a more thorough confession.

NOTE.—We here set forth two methods.—The first depends rather upon the *reason*, and sets in relief the *disorders* resulting from venial sin. The second appeals to the *heart*, and makes one feel the hurt done to the *friendship* of Jesus.

We have already given expression to numerous feelings of contrition (see p. 18).

FIRST METHOD

Intrinsic Motives of Contrition

Note.—We shall explain later on (p. 138) why it may be very advantageous to accuse one's self of certain imperfections along with one's venial sins.—Here we do not hesitate to suggest several motives of contrition, where precept and counsel are very closely connected together.

I.—Venial Sin so far as it concerns God

1.—It is in opposition to his will

This is the aspect which it bears in the first place : a refusal to obey—resistance in little matters.

Contemplate God's *will*. It is high and serene and beneficent ; it can make no mistakes ; it is infinitely worthy of being loved and admired and obeyed.

Obeyed ! Note how it is obeyed by the material world. The sun and stars and the mighty forces of nature follow the laws it has laid down for them with absolute precision. Not a single breach occurs throughout the immensity of space and the long succession of the ages. And I, in my insignificant little existence, lost in the depths of all this vastness, venture to evade or resist the bidding of this same will !

Am I to despise this will because my disobedience will not be punished with hell; or am I to suppose that this will is less penetrating and wise in little things? Has not God the right to order me? Has He not made me from head to heel? Is He not ever my true Lord? To commit a venial sin is saying: "I will not!" We do not realize this enough.

II.—IT DISTURBS GOD'S PLANS

We have spoken of God's will in itself, let us now look at its object: it is none other than *God's plan*. A wise being does nothing without a preconceived plan. The plan of an infinite mind, however vast it may be, necessarily extends to the smallest details. Everything in it works together for a final end; everything in it is just and good.

God *wills* the fulfilment of His plans. His commands are not arbitrary biddings; they are part of the *general order of things;* they are its expression and law. Hence, to go against the least of its directions is to *disturb this order:* it always *curtails,* and often *impairs* the *divine plan,* if any one of the rules be violated. Did I ever think of this?

What is more, the disturbance which I introduce into the order of things may have far-reaching effects and continue even after I am gone. In machinery the wheels de-

pend upon one another. In God's plan, all the elements of which it consists have a reciprocal solidarity; if my free-will deviates, it may have fatal consequences upon others: a bad exercise of authority; incapacity in my duties; the influence of anything I say or do—all this makes up an alarming and unknown prospect which is full of responsibility! For although we are ignorant of these distant consequences, we nevertheless know that we do not disturb one of God's plans in vain, a plan made up of so many interdependent elements!

III.—IT WITHDRAWS US FROM GOD'S INFLUENCE

God is the universal agent for the fulfilment of His own plan. Not one of the acts that help to carry it out can be done without God's *inspiration* and *support;* His action is invisible and mysterious, but it is certain and necessary. God Himself could not endue me with the power to act alone *once only!*

In every sin, however slight, I *refuse* to obey the divine impulse; I withdraw myself from its lawful influence; my act is therefore empty, dead and contemptible, for God is not in it!—To act in and through me is His inalienable *right.* I infringe on this right. No doubt I hardly knew of this truth; no doubt, when I was committing venial sins,

I did not apprehend this mysterious side of the question; but was I not aware, at least in a general way, that every sin is an evil, and that it involves unfathomable consequences?

What a sad and dreadful power it is, to be able to nullify God's action!

IV.—IT LESSENS GOD IN HIS WORK

Venial sin lessens God, not in His essence and in His life, but in His work and in the glory He expects to receive from it, in His good pleasure in ourselves and in His honour in the eyes of all intelligent creatures.

Think of the diminution I have inflicted upon Him! Through me, His glory will be eternally less than it would have been, His accidental happiness less full. When time is no more, God will not be able to say the words He uttered after He had finished the work of creation: "Lo! I have made all things very good!" I, for my part, have prevented His success.

Am I to go on inflicting such diminutions upon Him? Whether I will or not, each of my sins deprives Him of something.

V.—IT SADLY HINDERS THE LOVE OF GOD

Here is a touching thought: God wishes to have some esteem for us and much love for us, and to load us with benefits, for He is our Father.

If He desires to receive from us, it is that He may be able to give us the more. He ardently *desires* our happiness.

At the bottom of all this there is an immense love, a love so great that we are powerless to understand it ; but love desires nearness and intimacy and trust, it needs and lives on such things as these.

Every venial sin keeps God farther away. He is forbidden to enter into certain regions of our intimacy. He is not allowed to carry out some of His loving designs on our behalf. Every venial sin is a distrustful look which strikes a chill, a want of politeness that jars, a kind of bad treatment that loosens the ties of friendship : we refuse to be loved !

See how God is saddened and grieved and how He withdraws ever more and more, see how His love is held back in His heart as we keep back our tears, see how the Father cannot win His children's love as He would do, and how He is obliged to check His own affection for them to some extent !*

Is God, my Father, brought to this for my sake ? And why ? Because such and such an effort would cost me something,

* Venial sin does not in any way diminish God's *essential love* for us, because this love is based upon the degree of our sanctifying grace, which is not touched by this kind of sin. It weakens His good dispositions towards us. We are speaking of deliberate venial sin.

because such and such a gratification is too attractive to me; is not this rightly called selfishness and hardness of heart?

VI.—IT INVOLVES A CERTAIN CONTEMPT OF GOD

Here there is no question of the grave and expressed contempt which destroys all friendship, but of a sort of half-disdain, rather unconscious, but real. To appreciate it, it is enough to give an attentive glance at each of the foregoing considerations. Let us run through them from the point of view of contempt.

To prefer one's own will to God's is certainly a form of contempt and of personal contempt. On the one side a being who is *infinite*, and on the other a being who is *nothingness*—these two in opposition: I will —I will not! In carelessly altering God's plan, do I not appear to think that His plan is undeserving of serious consideration? Is not this despising His wisdom?—Withdrawing one's self from God's influence! This, indeed, is positively to refuse His divine co-operation!

When I rob God of a ray of His glory or of some inner satisfaction; when I lessen Him thus, I treat Him as one whom I care little about. But no contempt is like contempt for love! I stretch out my arms to a friend,

and he turns aside! I run to him gladly with the gifts of friendship in my hands, and I am scorned, and my gifts, too!

Surely, O Lord, I do not, indeed, see all these consequences when I sin; but they are certainly *involved* in the very fact, and nothing can make it otherwise! When I grieve a friend, I do not always understand how far I hurt his feelings. The child who disobeys his father often has no idea of the grief his act will produce. Thus is it with me! O Father, forgive! O Friend, be not grieved! I never knew!—But to-day, indeed, I know and am sorry!

Deep humiliation for the past, and a great lesson for the future.

II.—Venial Sin with regard to Myself

1.—It lowers my ideal

1. First of all, it lowers the ideal for which I was made, the ideal which God had in mind at the moment of calling me into existence. —The effect of each venial sin is to make me eternally lower in myself. There are heights I shall never attain, and an exquisiteness of feeling I shall never experience!—What heights of being and kindness and beauty I have missed for ever!

Every venial sin is formally opposed to *perfection;* and, if it be not repaired, to such *progress* as leads to perfection.

2. My ideal is not only lowered, but dimmed : I see and feel less ; and this lessening is partly unconscious. How sad is it not to be aware that one is lowering the principle of one's moral greatness within one ! Happy are those who at least have some suspicion of it ! Let them say to themselves : I shall see and feel less.—" Oh, I will go to the spring of Siloe and wash, and I shall see."

3. In proportion as my ideal is diminished in God's mind, so diminishes the esteem He has for me, the esteem of One who is perfect, the esteem of a Father !

II.—IT DIMINISHES MY HAPPINESS IN HEAVEN

Yes, a single venial sin is enough to do that ; and how will it be in the case of a great number ?

Had it not been for this venial sin, so lightly committed, I should have dwelt in a still higher sphere, a clearer and brighter environment, in which God would have manifested Himself to me with still more enchanting loveliness. I should have been still nearer to His heart, more deep in His intimacy, and that for ever. My sight would have been keener, my heart larger and my whole soul wider open to receive Him !

My relationships with the angels and saints, and with my own dear ones restored

to me, would have been more familiar and higher and sweeter! I should have had a larger place in the love of Mary, I should have been still more her child. My union with Jesus would have been still more intimate and close; I should have been still more His, and He would have been still more mine!—Through all eternity I should have better understood and loved both the adorable Trinity in itself, and the fatherhood of God extending to myself, and the life of the Word taking possession of mine, and the action of the Holy Ghost uniting me, the insignificant, to infinite Light, and me, the finite, to Love that is limitless!

O happiness which I cannot now feel because it is too great, but which I can imagine: this is the happiness that satisfies God! And yet I despise it; for every venial sin, however slight it may be, tends to diminish its enjoyment for me.

III.—IT COMPROMISES EARTHLY HAPPINESS

Our earthly happiness, too, is victimized by venial sin. Experience seems to show that the devout are more tried than others; they have a larger share in the troubles of life, and they have special sorrows in their relations with God.

No doubt, now and then a pure soul has been known to ask for the cross, and the cross

has been sent to ennoble her life ; but upon how many does it not fall as a punishment ! Sin must, indeed, be expiated ; and is it not a grace that it shall be done as soon as possible, in order that God may no longer see this deformity in us ? Is it not a grace that this should take place on earth ? Purgatory will then not hold us in its unutterable pains, and God will open His arms to us all the sooner.

But would it not be better to spare ourselves this chastisement here below, for it is often very grievous : heavy family troubles, overwhelming maladies and sickliness, crosses and worries, annoyances of all sorts, chilled affections, and vanished joys.—And in a higher order, the loss of divine consolations, inward troubles, darkness and dryness, abandonment and a distaste for sacred works, anxieties and troubles, and the like.

If I had always been diligent in my duties, fervent in my prayers, indulgent towards all, should I not have given God more glory than I have done by accepting, even generously, the troubles I have deserved ?

O Father, who lovest Thy child, O kind and loving Father, Thou wouldst be pleased to spare me such and such sufferings ;—and, in any case, Thou wouldst be better pleased to see me bear them as a trial ! My sins have deprived Thee of this satisfaction !—To punish is a painful duty : I inflict it on

Thee!—And as for me, I who feel every sorrow so keenly, I who tremble at every possibility of evil; I am not able to make this simple reckoning: that by avoiding venial sin I secure the twofold advantage of suffering less myself and of being better loved by God!

O Father, spare me not the troubles of this life, but rather spare me the sins that bring them upon me!

IV.—IT WEAKENS MY POWER OF ACTION AND OF PRAYER

1. St. Martin, who was a little while weak towards heretics, found his influence over souls diminishing: he did not touch them so quickly; and so was it with his influence with God: he no longer worked his usual miracles. —This sort of result occurs frequently in the lives of the saints, and in the experience of innumerable devout souls.

Such poor good as we are able to do comes from grace like water from a spring: I am only the channel. If the source, owing to hindrances, is choked or dries up, what can I do?—There will be visible barrenness in every action which is human only, or which, though supernatural in principle, is impaired by numerous sins. A life which is full of them keeps God at a distance; and if God withdraws, nothing but our impotence obviously remains.

2. Note it well : our power of intercession is founded upon personal credit ; but what credit shall I have with God, if I offend Him, even if it be only by imperfections and unfeeling conduct ? Is it not absurd to claim from God what He does not owe me, if I refuse to pay what I owe Him ?

Think of some grace which you ardently desire but have not yet obtained : perhaps it is your own fault !

III.—Venial Sin with regard to Fervour

Venial sin is essentially opposed to fervour, for it infringes upon all the elements of spiritual activity.

I.—IT CHECKS THE INFUSION OF ACTUAL GRACE

It can never be said too often : actual grace is the necessary principle of all our supernatural acts, of every one, even of those of the most perfect.—But God gives graces ordinarily in proportion to our faithfulness and prayers. Now, faithfulness is directly impaired by venial sin, and prayer is more or less weakened by the sense of uneasiness which it leaves behind.

It is venial sins that are *quite intentional*, which are specially to be dreaded ; they sadden and restrain God's heart ; they also diminish our confidence : do we go with the same readiness to one whom we have hurt ?

Accidental sins and frailties do not produce these results : sometimes one may even say of them, in the Church's meaning of the words, that they are happy faults : they fling us at God's feet with deeper humility and more earnest prayer.

Fear *intentional* sins, however slight they may be ; have a boundless fear for those that *cling* to you without any real regret : they establish a *permanent* infidelity, and therefore a *permanent* hindrance to the outpouring of grace.

II.—IT IMPAIRS OUR NATURE

The second principle of spiritual activity consists in the right disposition of our nature. Anyone in good health and training will be active.

Now voluntary venial sin always brings with it an impairment of our nature. This deterioration may sometimes be like the effects of *poisoning*, sometimes it produces *depression*.

1. If the thing which has led us into sin is bad or dangerous in itself ; if it calls forth our evil tendencies, it enters into us like poison.

When a slight poison creeps into our organism, it works in it in the way of decomposition, and this is seen in disturbance and weakness ; but here the poison is too weak

to produce any disorganization worth noticing, and a vital reaction soon sets in, for contrition eliminates it ; but it is none the less true that venial sin, if committed deliberately, has exercised a hurtful influence on our moral nature, though our ignorance cannot measure the degree nor foresee the consequence of it.

How will it be if these sins are numerous ? How will it be if they get a hold upon us ? Dread an *affection* for sin, which is a chronic poison, and react by means of vigorous contrition, the vitality of which will run through all your veins and drive out the deadly germs from them.

2. Another deterioration always takes the form of *depression :* the will which bends loses its strength, and if it often bends, at what stage of weakness will it stop ? Now, the will stands to our moral strength in the same position as vitality does to our physical strength : it is a principle of action. This principle is directly infringed by venial sin.

A will which is *depressed* by frequent failures becomes less and less capable of *resistance* and *reaction ;* it easily falls into sin and sins often ; and thus it drops into a state of relapse which creeps on by degrees and escapes notice. Alas ! a state of relapse may bring anyone to stumble into the deepest falls !

III.—IT SETS ASIDE SOME DEFENSIVE BARRIERS

1. As we have seen, God's laws are very wise barriers to protect us from evil; they keep us in the order of things; and they shelter our happiness. If we cast down some of these defensive barriers by certain habits of venial sin, if, for instance, we leave the spirit of obedience through the spirit of independence, of humility through some want of respect for others, and of mortification by following our tastes with too much eagerness, we lay ourselves open to every enterprise of Satan.

2. Or to take another point of view: what are our strongest defensive barriers? Are they not our virtues? Who can fail to see that every venial sin tends to weaken them? Goodness, so far as it is made up of habits, is built up or pulled down by the repetition of acts. Here, it is true that we are speaking of slightly bad acts, but that may be a reason why they are all the more frequent. The sacred barriers have given way at many points. You have less reserve and prudence and less shrinking from evil!

Be on your guard against *habitual* venial sin.

Reflections
on the diminution of the spiritual life.

1. Venial sin diminishes spiritual activity: but, activity is life.—Thus, one of my powers begins to flag.—A slight paralysis begins to creep over me here or there.—I am less prompt and energetic, and therefore, less fervent. Perhaps part of my spiritual life is beginning to break up.

2. Moral, like physical activity, is a source of heat: this heat is in proportion to the activity expended.—Well, here are my feelings and desires and prayers becoming more and more lukewarm.—Here is my generosity growing less ardent.—My love for God may be fundamentally the same, but its action is less vigorous.—And when it finds expression, its utterances are less loving.

3. Let us add to the above, that every venial sin is a *descent:* it brings us lower. In fact, we draw nearer to what we are trying to find, and what we are trying to find here is something *lower than duty;* it is often some satisfaction of an inferior type. However slight may be an act of sensuality or of curiosity or of irritability, it is none the less something low. Do you want a proof of it? If it is detected, you blush!

IV.—The Consequences of Venial Sin with regard to Our Neighbour

The sense of responsibility is little developed among us ; our lightness is the cause of this, we do not like to go deep. But if the evil which is not seen does not make us guilty, it nevertheless produces effects which are just as bad.

1. *Generally,* it may be said that all our venial sins are hurtful to others, all of them, even those which are known to ourselves only. The reason is easily seen. Whatever lowers or weakens or deprives us of grace, makes us *less ready* to fulfil our duties, whatever they may be. We cease to be up to the discharge of the responsibility laid upon us ; we do not fall short in prudence or kindness, or in courage, with impunity.

2. Part of our sins come out or give some hint of their existence. And here we see a new kind of responsibility, that of *example.* People are led to do what they see others do. If they do it already, they are reassured if they find that they are not alone. Every defective act is like a *bad lesson* given to a family or social circle.—How can the evil thus taught or authorized by us be estimated? Everyone, even if he were morally good, would be alarmed, if God were to reveal all the consequences of this sort resulting from bad demeanour in church,

from some frivolous proposal, or from thousands of other shortcomings considered unimportant, for it is written : " Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."

3. Our venial sins not only fix this responsibility upon our shortcomings and the example we give : they produce generally a *direct* harm : a too hasty word hurts and upsets anyone,—an unjust reproach arouses a rebellious spirit,—the least disrespect will sometimes alienate for ever,—a want of vigilance may result in moral ruin.—A long list of evils caused by even slight infringements of the duties of our state of life might be drawn up. As we have said elsewhere : moral laws are, for the maintenance of the moral order, just what physical laws are in the physical order of the world : every infringement necessarily brings in a disturbance.

To be conscientious is not only to avoid evil when it is apparent, but to try to find it out and to anticipate it.—One can never make sure of escaping such responsibilities except by checking one's self in *every* sin.

V —Venial Sin as revealed by Purgatory

Lowering and terrible darkness, amidst which nothing can be distinguished !— Agonies like that of asphyxia which struggles

for air in vain ; or of the sick man who tosses and turns without a moment's rest.—Long years of despair as of a prisoner all alone in his dungeon.—The heart torn with remorse, worse than the laceration of the flesh.—All these results may be produced in the disembodied spirit, as they arise here from natural causes.

God did not make Purgatory as a sort of scarecrow or empty menace. Nor did He make indulgences to give us impunity.—We are ignorant of the nature of the pains that will be inflicted upon us, of the length of such sufferings, and of the use to which God means to put indulgences. The mystery, with which He has surrounded these things intentionally, is in itself a dread warning.

Purgatory is a revelation of venial sin. God, being justice itself, cannot punish sins beyond what they deserve. The pains of Purgatory make our senses tremble ; they ought rather to enlighten our conscience. Had we been left to make our own inferences, we should never have understood how much opposition to God and disorder is involved in venial sin. The testimony of Purgatory is more eloquent than all our reasonings.

And yet God loves the souls whom He keeps amidst such torments ! Some of them

are certainly more dear to Him than many of those already in heaven! He allows the moral law to take its course, the law of expiation!

This law is so just, and to undergo it is so noble, that the souls of Purgatory would not escape it of their own accord at any price. Having a thorough understanding of venial sin, they hold it in aversion and pursue it even in themselves at the cost of the worst sufferings.

If only they could begin their lives on earth over again! If they were only allowed to make expiation here below! What desert, what mortification and endless prayers would be enough to fulfil their penance? What pains would they not take to avoid even the shadow of a sin!

The great sorrow of souls in Purgatory is undoubtedly to feel themselves separated from God, and that they do not please Him. They have become suddenly enlightened as to His infinite lovableness. They fling themselves towards Him with wide-stretched arms and eyes full of distress and heart distraught, and expiate with this afflicted love the light offences they have committed against that love misunderstood!—Moreover, indifference is enough to bring down upon itself such chastisement. St. Alphonsus teaches that there is in Purgatory a kind of

prison of honour for those who have committed no other sin than that of not having loved well enough.

Human language is too imperfect for speaking of such things, but we may say that God *suffers* in thus punishing souls who are dear to Him and in keeping them far from His fatherly arms; for at this very moment He loves them far more than all the hearts of fathers and mothers put together could do!—Spare God this pain and constraint and time of waiting: this were a noble motive for avoiding venial sin. The finer spirits will understand this—*love* of expiatory suffering is the natural inference they draw from it.

To displease God and to see themselves repelled by Him by their own fault, just when they were about to be united to Him, this is a most touching motive for souls who love!

VI.—A Prayer of Hope

O my God, this vision of the results of venial sin alarms me. What! for a fleeting and unimportant act dost Thou smite me with all these forfeitures, the consequences of which are eternal! Thou accusest me of lessening and despising Thee!—Against these

unforeseen consequences, it is true that my reason has no reply, but my feelings rise up in protest.

The word *irreparable* is too like a stone that seals a tomb. Under its weight in the darkness are piled up thousands upon thousands of lost goods. Every day I bring some new failures; weeks and months and years of my life have buried innumerable merits in it.

O God Almighty, O good God, O wise God, who hast endowed the material world with inexhaustible sources of renovation, wouldst Thou condemn to final impotence my will which is conscious of its sins and eager to repair them? Can it be that, in forgiving me, Thou givest me back Thy grace and love and heaven, and yet wilt not leave me any way of restoring to Thee the glory I have taken from Thee? Wouldst Thou not permit me to lift up my destinies once more to the height they were meant to reach? Wouldst Thou not allow me to love Thee to that extent?

As I state the facts of this deep problem, I begin to get fresh light upon its solution. Yes, what is gone is gone, and omnipotence itself cannot prevent a diminution from having occurred. A fact is an eternal thing. But from the fact of a sin which has been punished, as from the trunk of a tree smitten

by lightning, is it not possible for branches to break out? And if they were to be more vigorous than the former ones, if the accident were to give freshness to the sap and make it more full of life, could we not say of such a resurrection that it has made a new creature, and a fairer and stronger one?

Yes, O my God, there is in the keen sense of the wrong that has been done to Thee, in the resolute desire for personal restoration, a new power called forth by the very fault itself. The hurt has brought into play deeper feelings and aroused a more vital activity. Generosity hitherto unknown has arisen within me in the midst of my groanings. My soul begins to see and act and arise! Oh, how mighty and loving were the tones of the Prodigal Son, of Mary Magdalene, and of St. Augustine; and one may ask whether, if their souls had been innocent, they would have found any as beautiful?

O my God, art Thou not the God of the Prodigal Son, of the Magdalene and of St. Augustine? Canst Thou see our misery without being touched by it? Canst Thou remark our fall, and not desire that we should rise again? And if man's heart can beat with the ambition of not falling ultimately below the ideal of man's innocence, is God's heart unable to set before him the ideal of repentance?—Oh, how great will be Thy wisdom in its ability to turn evil itself into a

still greater good! How eternally adorable will Thy goodness be, if it take away from the penitent the inconsolable regret of not being able to restore to Thy lessened love treasures for ever lost?

What, then, is the measure of greatness and goodness and merit? Is it not the extent of love? And Thou, O Jesus, hast preached all over the world this utterance of Thy large and loving heart: "*He who has been forgiven much is bound to love much!*" If I am bound to love, I have the grace and the means to do so. I can, then, lift up the impulse of my penitent love so high that it will go higher than my faithful love would have attained!

Remark.—This kind of great resurrection is seen especially in the case of great sinners. Venial sin rarely affects such wonders; this is one more reason for dreading it in anticipation, and afterwards for stirring one's self to more vigorous contrition.

SECOND METHOD

Contrition at the Feet of Jesus

Let us sometimes resort to the place chosen by the Magdalene for her repentance. Here we shall find a more penetrating light shed upon our sins, and floods of tender love poured out upon our sorrows. Such considerations as these should never be approached without deep recollection.

1

All that affects God necessarily affects the Man-God. His will and works and glory and love are the same: but, in Jesus, there is that which cannot be found in God, that which He has taken from us: the sublime inferiority of our sensible nature.

Jesus feels and enjoys and suffers like us: His eyes fill with tears, His face is marred with sorrow, His voice trembles or is sweet and gentle, and His heart of flesh is like ours, and loves as we love! Nevertheless, what a difference there is between the feelings of Jesus and ours. Ours, whatever we may think of it, are extremely limited: His fulfil the highest of ideals in this respect.

God cannot communicate, even to the soul of Jesus, absolute infinity; but since feeling is a created quality, it was in His power to

give it to Him without measure. It is, then, in some sort infinite of its kind, and there is not a shadow or degree of feeling which is not found in Jesus. What a broad view this affords of His past sufferings and His present affections, and of the delights He treasures up for us in heaven! But let us now think of His sufferings.

Since the affections of Jesus are like ours, like all of ours, though outstripping them, judge of His sorrow by the sorrow of a mother who is grieved by her child. She suffers from his indifference or roughness, and she suffers too from the evil he does to himself, and from the way in which he lowers himself.

II

Jesus knows the meaning of *friendship*. He can give it every possible expression, and He has all its anxieties and generosities, and alas! all its disappointments. The least lack of consideration, as we well know, is galling to close friendship. Nothing can be indifferent to it, for every act is a revelation of the heart.

How little do we know about such sufferings in Jesus, and how little do we feel them! Let us think that it is impossible for us to consent to the smallest venial sin without hurting this friendship.

1. All venial sin hurts the friendship of Jesus in what is His dearest desire, in that

which was the object of His coming to earth, its *raison d'être*, the union of God and man. "*That they also may be one in Us . . . I in them, and Thou in Me : that they may be made perfect in one.*" This cry of His heart on the eve of His Passion remains the continual cry of His state of glory.

Do we know how far, by some apparently slight venial sin, we hinder the divine union in ourselves first of all, and afterwards in others too, for in the supernatural world everything is reciprocally influential ?

2. Venial sin hurts the friendship of Jesus Christ in its *confidential relationships*.—Why has He revealed to us the beautiful heavens in which His heart flows forth in overwhelming love ? Why did He teach us to call God by the name of Father ? Why did He open to us all the great sources of peace, by proclaiming to us indulgence, sacrifice, charity, and His new law, His own law ? Why did He declare the blessedness of poverty, humility, gentleness and patience ? Why did He have handed down to us the touching record of His least actions, as examples for us ? Why did He leave behind Him His impressive and modest features, calm and sorrowful, always loving and ever memorable ; if our daily life is to discard this ideal and to give way to our fallen nature, if our mind and heart are not to learn their lesson thoroughly ? Does not friendship create similar tastes and

make its cherished ideas prevail between friends?

3. Let us stop a moment at a point which is full of an inner sadness: by venial sin we cease to *follow Jesus*, at least for a time; we stay behind and let Him go on alone; we leave the path which His footsteps have traced! Look at Him, He has noticed it: He turns back; He sees you looking for a forbidden pleasure, or avoiding a troublesome duty—and He bows His head. On certain occasions, look well: in His eyes there are tears, and in His heart, disappointment.

4. Then, there are the *glory of His name*, the influence of the faith over mankind, the hope of conversions,—do you not weaken them when you refuse to give Jesus the mysterious co-operation of your merits? Do you not go farther, and by your failings, which may not be very grave, but which are too evident, do you not lay yourself open to damaging criticisms? Do not our contemporaries consider our religion as one with our conduct?

5. Jesus not only loved and taught and acted: He *suffered;* He called Himself the Man of sorrows, and He says by His prophet: "*From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, My body hath no soundness in it.*" May not these words be applied to His heart? And if we were not entirely engrossed with the thought of His streaming blood,

we should more deeply feel the cruel martyrdom of His heart.

O Jesus, I see Thy pierced hands and feet; I behold Thy brow lacerated with thorns; I shudder at the pieces of flesh torn away by the scourging; I kiss each of Thy wounds with love—but if I try to think or speak of the wound in Thy heart, I do it without any true realization, for I scarcely feel it.

And yet, in His heart, there are wounds that I have made; and the great wounds close by do not hinder me from perceiving, even in heaven, the traces of my venial sins!

6. Let us follow this steadfast Friend even to the *Eucharist*, in which He has summed up all the wonders of His love: His Incarnation which becomes individual in me—His sacrifice renewed for me—His presence which ever is with me—and yet, O Jesus, Thy children go to and fro before Thy churches with absent minds; and yet, souls whom Thou didst love go so far as to profane Thee!—Alas, for my distractions and indifference and long forgetfulness!

Thou knewest all this, and Thou didst come, O God and Brother and Friend! and am I to dare to sadden Thee still more by my venial sins? Am I to bring my guilty coldness to the very foot of Thy altar, and even to Communion itself, which should link together two unequal but similar loves?

7. Lastly, consider that Jesus does not

possess the sometimes desirable inferiority, in virtue of which we are *unable to know all*,—which leaves us a large space for cherishing illusions as to our cheated affections,—nor has He the refuge of *forgetting*, which puts our sorrows to sleep.

Every one of our acts, in itself and in its motives, and in its remotest consequences, is to Him as the page of an open book, and does not escape His observation for a moment. What is His marvellous intelligence but a marvel of suffering?

III

As all these considerations unfold before my eyes, they stir me deeply: but—shall I say it?—they leave me, to some extent, astounded. Can all this be possible, for, after all, what am I? Yes, all this is as true as the Incarnation, as Calvary itself. Is it not, then, all the more astounding?

I believe it, but I have not enough greatness of soul to grasp it. I judge according to my feelings, like men, without thinking that Jesus feels more deeply than them all. He has infinite depths of feeling! I cannot find in myself, indeed, any measure of His sufferings; for in my heart there is no chord deep enough to echo in unison with the feelings which such thoughts reveal to me!

O Jesus, Thou hast not granted to earth such wonders that they may remain unknown. Thou hast not stirred our hearts to emulate Thy love that they may perpetually evade Thine advances! Come with Thy grace! It will transform me, and I shall see and taste and say to my soul: Thou shalt wound love no longer, thou shalt sin no more! There are Saints who have loved thus passionately! Rather than commit the least sin, they would have preferred a thousand deaths without hesitation! Now I begin to understand them; I admire and envy them, and perhaps to-morrow I shall be deep in the business and thoughts of this world, and shall have lost the sense of all these beautiful things, which will seem to me like some passing and almost vanished dream.

O Jesus, have pity on my human nature which, after being borne to the heights by grace, falls down of its own weight to earth! Be near me; show me Thy sweet face; sometimes speak to me and give me the abundance of Thy own heart! This is indeed the rule of friendship; and at last my love shall be won, and this shall be its crowning miracle!

PART II

DIRECTION

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS

I.—Confession and Direction

I. You make no progress, and yet you are not lukewarm : you wish to belong to God, and you fulfil the exercises of a devout life. But you make no progress, for your love has not grown more generous, and your intimacy with God has become no closer.

It seems as if you had reached the term of your final development ; and years go by without any increase in your virtue. And you feel this ; and it is right that you should grieve over it, for you fall short of the divine law of progress and increase. The traveller's foot must not stop short of the frontier of his fatherland ; time is given to man for him to increase unceasingly in the power to possess God.

II. You make no progress, and why ? The special causes are many, and soon we shall study them ; but the general cause is that you are not well enough acquainted with the path of progress ; and this road is pointed out to you by confession : for it puts you under a necessity of getting to know

your deviations and defects in order to accuse yourself of them ; it makes an appeal to your convictions and feelings to call forth regret, the needful matter of absolution ; and lastly, it demands of you good faith and an attempt to make good resolutions, under the name of firm purpose.

III. Personal effort, always supported by God's assistance, would certainly suffice for the task ; but it will be powerfully aided by the work of the priest : learn, then, to seek direction. It is easier than you think. As has been said already, the *confessor is too often asked to go beyond his part.* It is you who must ordinarily provide the initiative. It is for you to probe your soul, and to stir yourself to generosity of feeling, and to spend your time in looking for and in suggesting means to overcome yourself. Do this, and every priest will be ready to speak the word that brings you reassurance and enlightenment.

But you do not know how to acquire thorough self-knowledge and how to stir yourself up ; and especially, you do not know the path by which you may gradually advance towards perfection. The object of this little book is to point it out to you. Without putting forward anything novel, it adapts to confession the principles of spirituality taught by the Saints, endeavouring to disengage from a vast, and often rather

confused heap of notions, a few that are clear and methodical.

IV. The first part of the book belonged above all to the sphere of *confession*, the object of which is to wipe out sins; this part enters plainly into the region of *direction*, the function of which is to order one's life well.—Confession has to do mainly with the *will*, and direction with the *moral nature*.—The former deals mainly with *sins*, the latter with the *causes* that produce them. Confession purifies the soul; direction makes it virtuous. But if the soul may become pure in a moment, it can only become virtuous in the long run, and requires both a *deep knowledge* of itself and a *systematic knowledge* of the laws of the spiritual life. These two subjects will fill the remainder of this book.

The priest will find it a *reminder* of what he already knows; and the devout will gain important *instruction*, enabling them to receive direction more easily and more fruitfully.

II.—Fervour and Perfection

Spiritual progress is going from Fervour towards Perfection. Before pointing out the hindrances and setting forth the laws, let us begin by defining clearly the two terms: Fervour and Perfection.

I.—FERVOUR

As to this question, we have to give the true notion of Fervour, and then to determine its different states.

I. People often have loose or confused ideas about Fervour; yet it seems a very simple thing: fervour is *activity* of spiritual life.

If such activity results from momentary impressions and consists only of passing impulses, it is, indeed, fervour, but it is not a *state* of fervour, and need not occupy us here. —The state of fervour is *permanent* activity, *i.e.*, activity aroused by some deep-seated cause and sustained by favourable dispositions.

The deep-seated cause is a *fundamentally determined will;* and the favourable dispositions have to do especially with the *removal of hindrances* and, particularly, of defects. Under the influence of grace, anyone thus disposed acts and prays and does good works with promptness, frequency, and facility, thus realizing the characteristics

assigned by St. Francis of Sales to devotion. Devotion and fervour are usually synonymous.

Activity is not merely an attribute of fervour, it is its very *essence*.—This declaration is of the highest importance: in fact, it answers the anxieties of those many persons who think they have no fervour because they find that they are without any relish for religion. Dryness, coldness, bitterness, and temptation may be met with in this state, just as in the state of lukewarmness; spiritual activity remains exclusively its own, and its distinguishing, characteristic.

Let us cast some light upon this distinction. Fervour is not necessarily *sensible* fervour. One is the genus, the other is the species. There is, in fact, a *resolute* fervour which fulfils without relish all that God asks of it, and there is *sensible* fervour which does it also, but with relish. *Resolute* fervour is ardour of will; *sensible* fervour is ardour of will and feeling too. At bottom, fervour resides only in the will; activity is its entire essence.

But, it may be said, I am really lukewarm because I have no hearty feeling for the things of God; everything is indifferent and troublesome and wearisome to me; in my prayers, I find nothing to say or think of; and when I have to speak to God, I do it without any warmth.

These characteristics may, indeed, belong to lukewarmness; but they are not incompatible with fervour; and the distinction is easily made.—Do you sincerely *will* all that God demands of you? In other words, are you, in fact, *faithful* to your duties and resolutions, at any rate, ordinarily? Well, in spite of appearances to the contrary, you are in a state of fervour; for it is written: "It is not those who say, Lord, Lord, who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who *do the will* of my Father."

Your state is a *state of trial.* Trial is sometimes sent by God directly; most often He makes use of secondary causes: overwork, physical and moral, and deep vexations. Can you expect any life from a sick man or one in affliction? It is, indeed, enough if he has good-will. If there are some in the same conditions who can think, pray, act, and feel just as they did before, it is by some gift of nature or of grace, a very rare gift, which it is no reproach not to possess. No doubt, God can work such little miracles in your favour, but He prefers to let poor nature take its miserable course in order that you may be trained by struggle and sanctified by pain and humiliation.

II. Activity, as we have seen, depends on the dispositions of the will and of nature. Fervour will be all the more marked according to the *generosity of the will and the train-*

ing of the nature. This idea lies at the root of the distinctions to be drawn between the two states of fervour we are dealing with.

If the will is at all lacking in rectitude or vigour or generosity; and if, on the other hand, nature retains any inclinations contrary to what is good, fervour is wanting both in *solidity* and *intensity;* it must be both *disengaged* and *developed:* this is the first state.

If, on the contrary, the will is *entirely* devoted to God; and if, on the other hand, the nature is *well ordered,* fervour acts *freely* and *boldly:* this is the second state.

In the first state, the soul *learns* and *practises,* often at its own expense; in the second, it is *tested* and *established.* The first has defects which *expose* it to relapse; the second may also have some defects, but of a harmless character.

This simple general view shows that there are amongst the fervent two distinct classes. One may say of the first: they are *on the way* to perfection; and of the second: they *are* perfect.

II.—PERFECTION

Perfection means *complete rectitude of will* in a *nature so well-trained* as to yield the will the entire aid of its good habits.

Some writers put it entirely in the rectitude of the will, without considering that

such a disposition may be temporarily met with in any soul, even if not very far advanced; for instance, after a retreat. Perfection resides above all in our moral nature, in its equilibrium and in its virtues. To struggle successfully against one's defects is certainly meritorious; but to possess defects, against which one struggles, is imperfect.

The *perfection of the Saints* is that which carries this state to the highest degree: *heroism.*

Can there, then, be perfections *rising above* one another? Certainly. Thus, one who is perfect to-day will be still more perfect *in a few years*, if he is faithful. Such an one, who is perfect *according to the grace given him*, will always be less perfect than another who is *more highly favoured*. Perfection consists specially in an *equilibrium*. Its degrees are measured by its *intensity* and *elevation*.

Hence, here below we may always increase in perfection, even if we are perfect; but, to increase in *perfection* is to increase in *love*, and to increase in love is to increase in *union* with God. Our union in grace on earth will be the measure of our union in glory in heaven.

Perfection, love, union—a beautiful trinity of the soul!

III.—Imperfect Fervour

I.—its characteristics

I. What distinguishes it from lukewarmness is spiritual activity;—II. what differentiates it from the state of perfection is the imperfection of this activity. Let us develop these statements.

I. A well-disposed will turns freely towards God, who thus ceases to be an abstract being making no appeal to the heart. He is God the *Father*, He is also Jesus, God *with us*, and the Holy Ghost, God *acting within us*. What a beautiful intimacy is here!

There is no longer any *formal attachment* to sin; no longer any guilty resistance to duty. The holy law of the Commandments is accepted in its entirety; all the dispositions of Providence are submitted to; and there is a tendency to follow God's wishes on the way to perfection. What a beautiful uprightness of soul is here!

Such *exercises of piety* as are necessary for the sustenance of the spiritual life are adopted with prudence; they are usually, at least, faithfully observed, and, if need be, they are made up for by the spirit of faith.—The thought of God gradually grows more familiar and suggests devout yearnings.—Works of zeal are loved, and they are supported as far as possible, and it becomes a grief not to be

able to do more. What a life of holy work does this mean!

II. Yes, the soul is fundamentally upright and active, but her uprightness is more or less exposed to swerve, and her activity to slacken.

The danger sometimes arises from the will, sometimes from nature, and often from both together.

The *will* is not decided enough or firm enough: it hesitates, and even shrinks, when certain efforts are called for; it undergoes opposing influences.

The *nature* keeps some of its defects; but defects are permanent principles of mistakes and sins. We have allowed such and such a tendency to assume too large proportions; we do not know how to control our feelings; we are over-sensitive and irritable and depressed, or else too much swayed by our affections, or given to inactivity or pride, or the like. But these defects are *inclinations* or *weaknesses*. The inclinations lead us into evil, the weaknesses help it to show itself. If anyone's nature is really defective, it is like a machine the wheels of which do not work smoothly; it is liable to stop or go wrong. Hence result imperfections and even sins. Happily, such sins are chiefly *accidental* or arise *from frailty*, they are rarely quite intentional (of *deliberate purpose*); and often one can only see in them *imperfections*. —We shall now give a few explanations as to these various accidents.

II.—SINS AND REACTION

I. *Sins peculiar to this state.*—1. An *accidental* sin is one into which one falls without having time to *reflect.*

You have, indeed, seen that you ought not to do such and such a thing ; but you saw it, as it were, in a flash of lightning. For instance, you have made a blunder, and you see that it is noticed : an innocent falsehood comes to mind, and you feel it will be a bad thing to utter it, but there is no time to reflect ! The situation must be saved ; out slips the falsehood.—How many little acts of rudeness and concessions to self-love are something like this!

2. In an accidental sin, your responsibility is diminished by the want of reflection ; in a sin arising from *frailty*, it is weakened by the urgency put upon the will through your being more or less carried away. You do not want to boast of a good deed, but you have, quite ready to hand, some fairly modest form of expression ; you may feel that it is not right, but you hesitate, and finally let yourself go.—How often does the wish to say something smart, but not really charitable, end by winning its way !—How many questions too full of curiosity, and attempts to gratify the senses, do we find !—If you were quietly at home, if you could plainly see the *pros* and the *cons*, you would certainly decide as God would wish ; but, in the momentary confusion, nature carries the day.

3. *Deliberately meant* venial sin is quite another matter. You have time to reflect; you understand clearly the evil you are going to do; but it is only a venial sin—and you commit it. Here you have, indeed, a bad will, and are conscious of being formally unfaithful.

The relative gravity of these *deliberate* sins is estimated mainly according to the considerations counter to them that have occurred to you, and which you have set on one side. If you were enlightened and possessed of self-control, you could not only see the thing was wrong, but that it displeased God, that it would grieve Jesus, that it was a moral disorder, that such and such an unfortunate consequence would follow, etc. Anyone who is less advanced, or whose disposition is less careful, would not grasp all these contradictions; he would not consider, for instance, that He was grieving God: hence His fault would be less, for an act has just the character of all that is involved in what is understood and willed.

II. *The Reaction induced by Fervour.*—A few sins and defects, then, are the mark of this state; but what still better characterizes it is, that the sins are *regretted*, and the defects *fought against;* hence there is a vital reaction. The sins do not inhere in and corrupt the soul, like the flies in the ointment, spoken of by St. Francis of Sales,

The defects, too, are closely kept under watch and control. In some persons, they may be numerous and violent; never mind! In this stage of the spiritual life, one inherits a more or less compromised past; one finds within one more or less serious opposition. *Fervour* is there to repair everything.—Often vehement defects necessitate a stronger action on the part of the will and the use of more energetic means, and this brings about an increase of virtue which will not be achieved by those whose struggles are less keen.

This state of fervour is a state of training, both for those who have long lived a devout life, and for those who have lately emerged from a lukewarm condition. But, in all cases, the work of training must be a calm, well-ordered and brave struggle, never yielding to discouragement.

It is not a question of changing our nature, as we shall see farther on, but of setting it free and of giving it balance. All our natural tendencies have their *raison d'être;* virtue means keeping them directed rightly, and under proper control.

Note.—Those in this state afford the various characteristics just described: but they differ from one another according to the *degree* of their intensity or solidity, or of their height of virtue. Must it be added that they differ still more in the *kind* of their devotion, which results from their natural dispositions and their particular graces?

III.—ACTS OF IMPERFECTION

I. *What these acts are.*—Here imperfection must not be taken in the sense of a *permanent disposition*, but in that of an *act* not quite in conformity with virtue.

1. Thus, oversensitiveness, a vehement nature or miserable character, and the like, are imperfect dispositions.—To talk too freely, to lose a little time, to omit a devotional exercise, and so on, are imperfect acts. It is in the last sense that we may say: I have done an imperfect act.

2. An imperfect act is something like a venial sin, in that it partakes of its *voluntary* character; it differs from it, because it does not run counter to a *precept*, but to a sufficiently clearly manifested *wish* of God. To neglect going to Mass during the week, is an imperfect act; to talk or allow one's self to be distracted at it, is a venial sin; for, if one is under no obligation to go to Mass, if one does go, one is bound to behave one's self properly while there.

3. *Counsels* are the matter of these imperfect acts, as the *commandments* are the matter of sins; but just as we are not affected by all the commandments, so are we not invited by all the counsels. Circumstances, a feeling of attraction and obedience, are the ordinary signs of the call they make upon us.*

* As to these signs, see under *Attraction*, p. 336 *ff.*

God does not require of every devout person what He requires from a Saint, nor now what He will perhaps some day require of this very individual. Hence we may admire a number of acts of perfection without being *called*, on that account, to perform them.—This important remark is calculated to prevent much uneasiness.

4. But never forget this solemn deduction: an imperfect act is always a *resistance of grace*.*

II. *Is it a good thing to accuse one's self of these acts in confession?*—Here occurs a difficulty which must be cleared up. Since absolution only has to do with *sins*, ought one to accuse one's self of one's sins only, and to exclude the avowal of one's imperfections?—We answer without hesitating: No; and this is why.

1. It is true that imperfections are not matter of absolution, and some actual sin must always be put into the accusation, or some past sin must be recalled; but imperfections are calculated *to evoke all the feelings* that dispose one for pardon and progress: they humiliate us and arouse regret and help us to a better knowledge of ourselves. We have refused God some act of devotion which was quite within our power.—We have omitted some customary pious exercise without any good reason.—We have permitted some feeling of vanity or hatred

* Not of grace that orders, but of grace that invites.

or anger to linger on.—We have fallen short in some part of our regulations or resolutions (things that do not bind us under pain of sin).—Now, these accusations, which are all optional, are *in line with* confession, and often, in very watchful souls, they are the *only shortcomings of an entirely voluntary* nature in the days just past.

2. Then, are we always quite sure that behind these acts there may not be hidden some real, though slight, sin? The masters of the spiritual life teach that infringements of the rule ordinarily involve some kind of blame (in their cause: motives of vanity, selfishness, idleness;—in their effects: on ourselves, as principles of weakness; on others, as example). These remarks apply equally to any other matter.

Acts of conscience touch closely upon life; but all that touches upon life is full of mystery. Doctors recognize this so far as physiological phenomena are concerned. How then can we expect theologians to give the deepest analysis of the phenomena of the spiritual life, which is by far the most difficult to grasp?—Does this act in itself involve such a moral disorder as to amount to a venial sin, or is it, after all, an imperfection? In many questions, the most skilful declare themselves uncertain; but there, only theory is in question and the act in itself; but if this same act is to be followed up to

the conscience from which it emanates, the dimness and darkness still increase. Conscience is a Proteus full of changing shapes. What did it know? What did it intend? What were its real motives? God alone can really unravel such tangled elements.

Thus the theologian may say: this act in itself runs counter to such and such a commandment: therefore it is a sin.—This refusal of an act of generosity, that exercise omitted, this chosen natural gratification, run counter to no law: hence they are only imperfections: and yet, here again the soul is taken with a kind of remorse, and feels her spiritual life is in some way affected as to its fervour.

3. Consider well, too, what men think of friendship and of certain ill-defined hurts that affect it:—little services denied or done with a bad grace—visits too long deferred—a want of kindness to someone who has been well spoken of.—These light offences and a thousand others leave it, indeed, in its integrity, but do they not make us say: I was wrong? do they not make us feel that an acknowledgement is needed, and that some reparation would be fitting? But why should not this way of looking at friendship be applied to that which unites us with our divine Lord; and can any better time be suggested for making such acknowledgements than that in which we are about to renew the purity and strength of our love in His blood?

Moreover, this is what is done by the devout, and their consent attests one of those divine laws which are promulgated by Christian feeling under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

III. *Practical reservations.*—If we say to the devout : You may advantageously accuse yourselves of acts of imperfection, we hasten to add : take care not to overload your confessions with them ; avoid acknowledgements which are without meaning and without regret, the useless repetitions and prolixities proscribed by St. Francis of Sales. We have shown elsewhere that it is generally more advantageous not to make too much effort to confess even all venial sins, because it is far better to *specialize* your attack, and to isolate and *throw into relief* the *kind* of shortcomings that *compromises* our spiritual life *most.* Here it will be enough to observe that certain imperfections, being the true cause of a state of relapse, are more important to confess than certain venial sins of frailty or accident, which are only chance occurrences, and very transitory.

Yes, our accusations must always be *short* and *clear*, and of a *definite class*. But as to *that class*, do not fear to make it known in all its details, and try to find out and to explain the causes that maintain it, and lastly, to follow it out into the imperfections which often characterize it.

IV.—Two Methods of Self-Reformation

I

There are two methods : one of *combat*, the other of *love*. Both lead to the same end, but by different ways : by combat, we attack the defect directly ; love makes it disappear by taking its place.

If these two methods are distinct, they are not separate. Love requires combat in order to realize union ; and combat requires love in order to secure the victory. Together, they correspond to the twofold movement of the spiritual life that we have already pointed out : freedom and union.

The prevailing element gives its name to the method, whether it be of combat or of love.

II

It is natural to begin our exposition with the method of combat, which is the first in the logical order as well as in the practical order : for union to take place, is it not first necessary to get rid of hindrances ? And if the end is the thing we have in view first, it is attained last.

This method has, moreover, the great advantage of bringing us face to face with the mechanism of the spiritual life, and of showing us how it works. In our first chapter, we shall study the *causes that paralyse*

spiritual activity. We reduce them to three : the want of *effort*, want of *purification*, and want of *peace*. We shall see that want of effort is at bottom a question of *will ;* want of purification, a question of *order ;* and want of peace, a question of *submission*. The will is the mainspring ;—order, the harmonious disposition of the parts ;—and submission, the calm persistency of movement.

This division reduces to a small number of simple ideas the great complexity of the principles of asceticism, and this enables everyone to determine the special direction of his own reformation.

In a second chapter we shall study the causes which are most liable to make fervour *go astray*, and we shall group them under these two heads : *false notions*, or errors as to principles, and *illusions*, or errors as to ourselves.

CHAPTER I

CAUSES THAT PARALYSE SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY

WANT OF EFFORT
WANT OF PURIFICATION
WANT OF PEACE

FIRST CAUSE

Want of Effort

I.—THE LAW OF LEAST RESISTANCE

I. Fervour means activity; but, in our fallen state, the condition of activity is *effort*.

At the bottom of our nature reigns a kind of cowardice, and, if it rarely betrays itself in an odious manner, it is because a crowd of incentives, some good, others poor, and others even bad, urge it on or hold it in check.

Necessity, self-interest, and the fear of condemnation oblige most men to do what is considered honourable; what is expected of us by others, through our having taken a side, is often the only support of our fragile resolutions; and our courage is often only the result of our self-love.

Personal dignity and affection, and many other secondary motives, join with the supernatural motives of fear and hope to lend us a strength which is not our own. But, do away with all these influences, and leave single-handed that human nature, which,

thus supported, made a fair show, and you will only find before you a poor creature worthy of nothing but pity. Such an one, who is strong and honoured in public life, cuts but a poor and sorry figure when confronted in private with the incentive of his passions—because now he is merely himself.

In the devout, something of this innate cowardice remains, only its object is changed: it is no longer a question of honour, but of Christian perfection. "Nature abhors perfection," said Père de Ravignan, and there is no sadder truth. And this is the reason: "To ascend we must make an effort: to descend we have only to let ourselves go," said Lacordaire.

While meditating these weighty remarks, I hear from afar a still more powerful word, which sums up the Christian life: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away." O divine Master, make me indeed understand how wanting to my piety is effort, and then I shall doubtless acknowledge that the poverty of my zeal and my relapses come mainly from the fact that I do not *will* vigorously enough. "Our progress is in proportion to our efforts," says the writer of the *Imitation*. —To will to advance is, then, to will to make an effort.

Effort, indeed, does not appear in the state of consolation; but this state presupposes

previous efforts, and he who enjoys consolations fights against his nature, and sacrifices and exposes himself; he suffers often, too; but all is carried off with such ardour that he is unconscious of the exertion of any efforts.

Besides, the state of consolation is like the ascent of Thabor, a passing occurrence; it dwells abidingly in very few souls indeed. The common lot is the bitterness of exile. The cross is the usual burden of the devout. —Now and then, though rarely, a favourable wind fills the sails and helps us gently up stream; but it soon dies away: and then we must take the oars again, for our nature, like the stream, ever flows downwards, carrying with it everything that is borne upon its surface, ship or boat, or light leaves.

II. Philologists observe that words, in passing from one country to another, undergo great transformations; and they teach that these changes obey a law which they call: *the law of least resistance.* Is a word hard to pronounce? Then the laziness of human utterance will attenuate it so much as to make it unrecognizable.—This law deserves to have a place in the theory of spiritual activity. There, indeed, do we tend towards the line of least resistance, and to prove it, experience may be added to the reasons we have already advanced.

Another and a similar law will complete

our analysis: *habit confirms any acquired deterioration.* It keeps us, therefore, in any imperfections which have been set up; it goes so far as to prevent us from noticing them. These two principles of decadence proceed and combine thus: the law of least resistance makes us give up or fulfil with negligence such and such a duty;—the law of habit keeps us on this lower level. Let us reckon how far a series of yieldings may bring us down!

II.—THE APPLICATION OF THIS LAW

I. *The law of least resistance in our exercises of piety.*—You have wisely chosen those which are required by the proper maintenance of your spiritual life; you have fixed their place amidst the many calls of your business or position. All was going on well; but now nature feels the discomfort, and is ready to welcome the easy pretext of urgent business or supposed indisposition, and it makes you omit several of these necessary practices. At first it was only for a few days; you would soon recover the leisure you wish for. Then your forgetfulness outlasted the continuance of the hindrances; some of the exercises ended by falling into neglect without any definite decision being taken.

And what are the first to be sacrificed? Just those which are most important, for

they are also the most troublesome ; meditation and, above all, the particular examen. Some people also discontinue communion and frequent confession. Why ? They could hardly tell. In the main, it is because they instinctively shrink from the effort of preparation.

Most of the devout do not go so far as to omit these exercises, at any rate for long. Some, indeed, by their very calling, cannot do so ; but even there, the law of least resistance lies in wait for them. In order to do them with less constraint, they are carelessly performed. The soul of the exercise is gone, the materialism of the act remains and deceives them. This way of acting is called *routine*, from the little wheels (*roue= wheel*, in French) which are driven by the foot, and which are the very image of unconscious movement.

Yet it happens, and it is to the credit of regularity in devotional exercises, that the soul finds in these practices, though indifferently done, enough help not to fall away altogether.

II. *Least resistance in the interior life.*— Devotional exercises make the regular motive force of spiritual advance : it is by their influence that thoughts are renewed, that feelings are kept alive and uplifted, and that resolutions are formed : they prepare us for the exercise of virtues by the virtues they

form within us ; they bring us the grace that enlightens or revives ; they put us more plainly on the way towards perfection.

Do your exercises produce such results as these ? Are they at least calculated to produce them ? Or are they wanting in what is their spirit and life, *the interior spirit ?* This spirit is indispensable ; "it might, strictly speaking, do without them, whilst they *all together* could not replace it." (St. Francis of Sales, *Spiritual Retreats.*)

Have God before you ; aspire towards Him ; pour your heart into His ; unite yourself to His will and desires and feelings : such is the true exercise of the spiritual life. It is a way of opening the fountains of heaven upon our souls ; it is the divine love loving our nature and making our life divine.

But, in order to keep a thinking being at this height ; to fix our wandering attention on these invisible ideas ; to keep free from the senses and the sensible our souls which have to live in this world ;—all this surely demands effort. Effort has to recall the wandering mind, to arouse the slumbering feelings, and to lift up the drooping will. If we do not bind ourselves to such efforts, God becomes gradually far off and forgotten ; our motion towards Him is less intense and less frequent ; supernatural motives do not arise to meet occasions when they occur, and our natural life resumes its usual interests.

If my exercises are dry and empty, if my heart has no yearnings, if I do not conform to the law of every life that aspires to progress, it is because effort is wanting. I ought to constrain myself to recollection and to silence; I must take pains to draw from the depths of the soul, where they are dormant, the good feelings and desires, and the vigorous purposes; I must sometimes resort to the memory of more profitable seasons, to the words of the Saints and to books of devotion, for expressions to enrich my poverty; but to act thus is to make efforts, and I am far from having the requisite determination!

III. *Least resistance in the practice of virtues.*—Do we need to show the necessity of effort in the practice of the virtues? Virtue means force applied to duty. When reduced to mere human honesty, duty requires many efforts, for it is generally made up of privation and constraint; but, as its ideal rises, its requirements increase, and when it comes to Christian perfection, it finds nature absolutely in revolt. Jesus preaches poverty, tears and humiliations; the cross is inseparable from His meek figure, and it appears as the sign that is borne from the beginning by those who are predestinate.

Great effort is needed to embrace such a life; but great efforts, too, are required to

follow it up. A momentary generosity costs far less than such perseverance. Do away with effort, and selfish and carnal nature quickly resumes its inborn tendencies.

Why does our spiritual life languish? Why does our nature still succeed in securing a hearing when it demands present pleasures? Why are we less patient and humble and reserved than formerly? Is it not because carelessness has crept into our spiritual life? We do not wish to offend God, we would not even withdraw from any duty of perfection that makes its call upon us; but we are not *on the watch:* we do not notice that such and such a thing is defective, and that such and such circumstances demand an act of virtue. We are not *resolute;* with time our energy seems to have got exhausted.

Assuredly, in such conditions the spiritual life runs the risk of getting exposed to a relapse. If it does not go so far as this, thanks to our devotional exercises and to a certain amount of effort, yet our virtue remains painfully stationary; the law of progress is violated: *progress is proportioned to effort.*

III.—INSUFFICIENCY OF VITAL REACTION

I. Any organism which is affected by an element of deterioration remains upset if it does not react; this is a universal principle. In the physical sphere nature usually does

this at her own expense, with or without our assistance ; whilst, in the supernatural order, this effort is incumbent on the will, assisted by grace. The soul is not *warned* against the approach of evil by pain, nature's outcry which instinctively calls for a remedy ; hence special *attention* is needed.—If our spiritual life in its normal state demands effort in order to act, when it is weak and ill, it demands much more if it is to react.

II. You have passed through disturbing temptations ; you have repelled them, but you remain uneasy ; deplorable impressions linger on in a latent state ; the bad attraction still appeals to the senses. The mud has been stirred up, and it has to settle down ; otherwise, the disturbance will become violent again, and a fresh revolt will have to be quelled. Half-victories prepare the way for defeat ; if the beaten enemy is not pursued, he will soon take the offensive once more.

III. The duty of reacting is still more binding after a *sin*. A sin is always an act opposed to a habit of virtue, and tends to weaken it. It accentuates the inclination to evil—it causes injury and weakness.

Do not reckon on a commonplace confession to regain your self-possession. The sin is wiped out no doubt ; but its bad effects continue. To react, energetic restraints are necessary, and even sensible punishments.

Happy are those who make use of them: such a reaction is not satisfied with a restoration to health; it also becomes an instrument of fresh progress.

Insufficiency of reaction is the commonest principle of relapse. This is a remark to be remembered.

IV. This need is likewise felt in certain *spiritual indispositions* in which all sense of the good seems to have gone.

Whether they arise from some act of imprudence or from a moral infirmity or from a physical condition, they expose one to the same risks. Even in *trials* coming from God, reaction is necessary: we must form clearer ideas and have keener feelings; we must read and pray and act nevertheless. Such renewal demands a great effort (see *Renewal*, p. 355).

V. We must say the same of those *periods of worldly dissipation*, in which our time, our mind and life become scattered amidst a host of things, it matters not whether small or great. In the whirl we have lost much of our zeal for piety. Journeys and visiting and business have loaded us with a multitude of cares; the vortex of important or of worldly affairs has taken hold upon us and carried us away. There is certainly no sin in all this, but it is a bad state of things against which it behoves us to react.—Do we react? Do we resume, as soon as we

can. all the means we have temporarily given up ? Do we take care to *plunge deeper* into the divine intimacy by more frequent aspirations ? Do we have recourse to a day's retreat, or at least to a few hours' silence ?—Do we return to our neglected communions, and do we prepare for them earnestly, even if we have no consolations ? —Nature does not readily let go what she has taken hold of ; effort alone tears it from her grasp ; here again "*it is the violent who bear away the kingdom of heaven.*"

Let us apply this remedy to the time following an illness or engrossing business, or any forced abandonment of our devotional exercises. There always remains a state of weakness to be repaired, a confused disorder which must be put straight, an incipient decadence which it is urgent to get rid of.

The Treatment of this Malady

the will is the instrument of effort

I. If there is a universal law, it is the *law of effort.* We see it so much at work on every side and at all times that it appears to be inseparable from the law of life. While plants endeavour in silence to gain a little room below and a little air above, animals are cruelly fighting and destroying one another. Among men, what is competition if it be not an effort to get possession of a piece of land or a little money or a few votes; and with what roughness and persistency and expenditure of activity? We only know too well!

To make an effort is to try to leave a state which is less perfect. Effort is the very action of life in quest of some development, and it is endued with such a marvellous power that not only does it make use of means already realized, but it raises up new ones in the limbo of our latent forces where life germinates. Some great thinkers have pushed this observation too far, and have reached the following conclusion: the need creates the effort, and the effort creates the organ. This is a mistake; there is here no *creation*, but the *production* is sometimes so unexpected that it looks like creation.

II. Is this law of effort unknown to the spiritual life? Then it would have to meet no hindrance to its progress. Here, no doubt, the struggle is not between brethren; the kingdom of God is wide enough to take in all; but it is noble and beneficent, and is put forth against what is contrary to God's good, man's good, and our own good.

Amongst all other creatures, are we to be the only ones to decline effort, and progress along with effort? What! in order to get higher, and that in a merely second-rate sphere, others advance and struggle; and by a sad fate, all their efforts put together succeed in attaining this final result, to enrich the ground with a layer of dust! And we, in order to increase our spiritual life, and to extend the kingdom of God over others, and to win the new heaven and earth of infinite happiness, are we to display nothing but effeminacy and cowardice?

It is written: "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.*" Such is, indeed, the condition of a divine life in a fallen nature! No doubt this divine life adapts itself wonderfully to our nature, but it only adapts itself to the best that nature has to offer. What in our nature is low offers resistance while it is alive. While it is alive! and it is living in us now! As soon as you would do certain virtuous acts,

do you not feel in your tastes and in your immediate interests, or merely in your habits, an opposition which must be overcome? Later on, when you have reached a much higher level, in the stage of freedom won and divine union strongly linked together, you will find that there is still effort; but this effort will cease to be a struggle and will become an elevating force. To-day let us prepare for the fervour that enjoys by the fervour that toils.

How many times, in order to start on our devotional exercises and to make them more active and lively, shall we not have to realize the *trahere mentem* of St. Ignatius (*drag* our refractory attention to them)!—How often shall we have to strive to keep ourselves united to God in our work!—How many struggles will there be to uphold a stumbling virtue with difficulty!

III. Amongst those who are lacking in devotion, the want of effort is easily explained by the total absence of any religious ideal. Why should they conquer self and take pains, if they scarcely know God?—But now we are speaking to the devout, to those who are well instructed and well disposed, and we say to them: whence comes the languor which, in some cases, might be termed cowardice? It comes from weakness in the natural force of the will, in the faculty whose duty it is to rule: the *will*.

The evil of our day is felt even in piety: people do not will strongly, and they do not know how to will. In the infancy of the nations, the will is too vigorous and breaks forth in excess; but in their old age, it breaks down in exhaustion.

I.—The Training of the Will by its own Exercise

I.—Its conditions

1. *To will is to determine.*—A strong will begins with recollection ; it imposes silence on all that has no right to speak ; it listens to reason, and then it says : I will.

Sometimes will is identified with *violence* of desire or *impetuosity* of decision. Nothing can be farther from the truth. This is not will but *passion,* with all the characteristics of the latter : agitation and disturbance, and also inconstancy. Will is the work of *reason :* vehemence is the work of *impressions.*

2. To will involves the resolute *execution* of what has been determined wisely.—There are some who always hesitate : when action must be taken they are still seeking what to do. These fearful persons look too far ahead ; every possibility stops them, as if the most reasonable course was without any uncertainties. To reflect during the time for execution is to become weak.

3. Lastly, to will means to *persist.*—Without a spirit of continuity, no work can come to any good, and without a great deal of tenacity, the arduous work of perfection is impossible. There are those who are thrown out by difficulties. If you have the approval of your reason and of God, what do hin-

drances matter ? and ought you not to calculate upon meeting them ? And after all, what are they ? Often merely contradictions and criticisms and the outcries of public opinion, which is always on the side of the fault-finders. Keep calm and go on.

To *will* in such conditions is to possess a *character*, to be somebody. No one has more tenacity than a man of high reasoning power, unless it be a man of great faith, a Saint.—Be on your guard against thinking that it is a sign of humility or prudence to hesitate in coming to a decision, or to put into practice in a timid fashion the thing settled on, and to give in on encountering opposition : " Do not call this humility," says St. Francis of Sales, " but weakness of mind," and do not ascribe to prudence conduct which is supremely imprudent, since it is demoralizing. Humility and prudence are useful counsellors : by making us will wisely, they enable us to will powerfully.

II.—ITS EXERCISE

Were you born with a weak will, and was your bringing up enervating and weakening ? Do not despair : will improves like memory, like artistic skill, in fact, like anything that has life.

Deep within us are mysterious powers which work for health, if that be the object of our endeavour. Therefore *strain* your

desire, your sustained desire, toward the strengthening of the will: say again and again: I mean to get will-power, to be a man of character!

Under the impulse of this latent force, *exercise* yourself in every act that builds up the will, especially in such as we have just described: use calm reflection; dwell upon no minute details, but upon the *root of the matter;* then make up your mind.—When you have done this, do not look back at your reasons; confine yourself to carrying out your decision calmly; shake off any timidity; say to yourself that you are acting in God's name. Let no opposition stop or disturb you. Such are ordinarily the trials of the good; and if you would be perfect, rejoice in them, for they temper the will.

Do thus not only in the things of piety, but also in those of life; for all practice is improving. Cultivate *decision, resolution* and *constancy:* they are positive good qualities, and, by bringing them into play, you will get into the swing of them, and form the habit of them: do this to please God, who means you to be strong.

III.—ITS HINDRANCES

1. Fight the defects which are opposed to the exercise of the will: *levity of mind* which avoids reflection, and *impressionableness* which causes instability.

2. Beware of *imprudence.* Exaggerated or blundering efforts produce the following states: uneasiness, annoyance, discouragement, and lassitude. If you are overloaded, do not throw off the burden of your own accord, for this will make you think that you are acting in a cowardly manner, and would demoralize you; but submit your ideas to your confessor; then you will be free and reassured, and you will accept with a good heart any relief which he prescribes.

3. Let us conclude with two counsels of high importance: *do not let in the thin end of the wedge—do not parley with duty.* A company is put to flight as soon as it ceases to close up its ranks; fruit soon goes bad when it begins to be tainted.—In the same manner, any virtue easily gets relaxed if anything gives way. Thus it is with those who begin by *lessening* the *intensity* of their efforts. Prayer, duty, and character are affected by it. There is carelessness and negligence. You drop some devotional exercise; the exercise is first curtailed, and ends by falling out of your habits, like the falling of some dead piece of fruit.

Pretexts are never wanting: some work, or, sometimes, some good to be done; nor are illusions lacking: oh, it is only for to-day; I shall make up for it to-morrow. This is arguing with duty; but parleying nearly always leads on to yielding.

It is a good thing to accuse yourself in confession of these faults of omission or of negligence—yes, *faults*, for you will rarely omit a practice which God asks for, but does not demand, without injury to some virtue.

II.—The Training of the Will by the Influence of Moral Forces

To this direct exercise of the will, add the influence of certain aids which may be regarded as the practical elements of willing : *conviction* and *feeling*. You only decide upon an effort if you are moved by a reason or a feeling. Conviction brings to bear the influence of a decisive motive ; feeling, that of an impelling incentive : on the one hand, it is mainly the work of your reason ; on the other, of your impressions.

I

THE INFLUENCE OF CONVICTIONS

A will which is actually timid and weak will decide with resolution if it is seized with a powerful conviction. How could it hesitate ? Its duty is clear and imperative ; to refuse duty would be to despise reason and to outrage conscience. Perhaps it may lead a trembling soul to act : to tremble, is the instinctive effect of an impression : to act nevertheless, is a free effect of the will.

Conviction makes its appeal to one's sense of the true and right : it awakens the energies whose duty it is to defend this sense : that is why it brings all our powers into play, makes

use of all our means, and causes them to co-operate in every possible way. The sacrifices called forth by political convictions are well known. What may not be expected from religious convictions, which are the most certain and the noblest, and have a far higher importance ?

1.—Vigorous Faith

The first of all convictions is that given by faith ; not by any sort of faith, but a vigorous and primitive faith, such as is seen in the first Christians, the Fathers of the desert, and in the Saints of the Middle Ages. They did not split hairs over the niceties of feeling. They were haunted by stout fears. The omnipotence of God secured their respect. For them, sin was, what it really is, the most incomparable of evils. Certainly, under their rough bark the sap of their Saviour dispersed, amidst their austere feelings, the finer streams of divine love. Certainly, these proud Christians were capable of tenderness, but they were, above all things, strong. Detachment, contempt for this world's goods, a pitiless struggle with their lower nature, and the practice of difficult duties, seemed to them quite natural matters, the obligation and the extent of which they did not dispute : and what a solid virtue was theirs !

II.—The Esteem of Perfection

Conviction may find equal strength in the *esteem of perfection*, which the masters of the spiritual life call the point of departure for fervour, and the foundation of holiness.

All supernatural motives are a stimulus. It is a question of nature and of personal grace. Therefore each soul must follow its bent. What is important for the training of the will is not the *motive* of conviction, but *conviction itself;* that is to say, the *impelling force* contained in it. (Read Rodriguez, *The Esteem of Perfection.*)

III.—Practical Principles

Since our determinations depend upon our ideas, well-grounded ideas will result in well-ordered conduct: but to have well-grounded ideas we must have *principles*. There is no need to have a great many: a few practical rules, if clearly drawn up, will suffice. Too great an abundance is a cause of weakness: they scatter one's attention. Do you not remark that the saints have always some favourite phrase which expresses what they are, and animates them?

Most people, instead of having principles, rather have habits and impressions. All that is rather *external* and lifeless, for life has

its inner principle. Conviction presupposes that you are perfectly enlightened as to certain truths. The most simple are in practice the most effective.

II

THE INFLUENCE OF FEELING

Conviction and *feeling* act upon the will, but in different ways: conviction by a *state of mind*, feeling by an *impulse*. The latter goes towards its object after the fashion of an instinct, without reasoning or immediate calculation, and often unconsciously; and since it is very human, it soon becomes predominant.

The thrill of feeling makes the will pulsate; it penetrates it and takes possession of it, and carries it away, acting like a patriotic song or the sound of a warlike bugle on the hesitating crowd.

No doubt it is a force which is subject to our free will; but, when once set going, it seriously affects our determination. To restrain or to arouse its activity according to the rules of what is good, is our immediate duty; but to improve it *in itself*, according to the needs of good training, is a duty of wider scope.

Specially considering the practical side, we shall here confine ourselves to showing

how the will is sustained by two feelings of major importance: dignity and sensibility.*

1.—Dignity

1. Anyone who has a keen sense of dignity feels a shrinking from all that is low and ugly; on the other hand, he is drawn towards everything great and beautiful. He understands God in His majesty, is conscious of the rights of his neighbour, and has a keen sense of self-respect. His given word, and resolution once taken, are sacred to him.

To act nobly, to be jealous of one's perfection, to be able, if need be, to maintain one's rights and to resist, is not pride, for it is all in order. It is, indeed, to keep one's self up, but it is not to exalt one's self. One remains where one should be, one rises to where one is called: that is all. It is merely what is true and right. Humility forbids us, not to keep our advantages, but to presume upon them. To put this virtue in the suppression of one's initiative, or in the abandonment of a lawful right, has always been a mistake: to-day it would be a danger, for we need to have character.

A will which is naturally weak, if it is upheld by a strong sense of dignity, will be firm and constant, and capable of every

* See *Attraction* further on: under this heading is given the influence of several other feelings on the will

effort ; with a certain amount of weariness, perhaps, for the acts which it does, do not arise from itself, and are rather imposed upon it, but with an additional merit, and exercised in a manner less marked.

2. Here are a few counsels for the development of the feeling of dignity.

Elevation of ideas produces elevation of feeling. They are to be got from intercourse with great spirits ; but one rarely comes across these. One may also become steeped with them by certain kinds of reading. The modern school of piety is specially rich in them.

Attach the highest importance to the *motives* which influence you *habitually ;* never admit any that are too commonplace ; consider what is most honourable ; do not depend too much on motives of self-interest, even if they are spiritual.

Take care to appreciate *distinction* in your bearing, talk and procedure ; it is a lesson, and a sort of exercise, in dignity.

Never make *promises* lightly. To break them is a lowering of one's self ; to break them habitually is to kill any great power you may have—resolutions made in retreat, or in confession, or meditation, or even such simple promises as to pay a visit, to pray for a particular intention, etc. These small occasions have all the more training value because they occur so often.

II.—Sensibility

Dignity is a principle of power which gives us hardness and isolates us ; it might easily make us hard and self-centred ; but a nature is not complete so far as feeling is concerned, unless it is endued with a moderating and impersonal tendency : sensibility. We take it here in its complex meaning and in the ordinary sense of the word.

1. *Its aim.*—Sensibility is given us so that the feelings of others may be communicated to us in all their reality. It enables us to feel as they feel. The sight of a sick child, of an old man shivering with cold, or of an adult in tears moves us, and we seem to partake of their sufferings. In the same way, the happiness of those we love enters into us to make a part of our own.

Sensibility is an essential human faculty. It has its peculiar beauties, which appeal to us in an especial manner. Its power is very great, since it takes possession of our whole being. God knew this well, and His Incarnation is to some extent a happy way of turning this faculty to the best account. He made Himself a creature like us, full of sympathy for us. If Jesus had not smiled and wept, if He had not loved sensibly, we should have understood God's love less, and could not have given Him our love so easily.

2. *Its nature.*—Sensibility is not love as it is understood by philosophers. They set love in the will. Men do not understand it unless it appears in a more tangible manner. To love is not only to wish well. Can we define a mother as a being who wishes her child well? Even friendship requires more than that, otherwise it would be singularly like a matter of mere utility. We love with the heart. Sensibility is a keen or tranquil emotion according to circumstances, but it is always penetrating, and it gives warmth to the will for the good, and awakens both tenderness and sacrifice.

Sensibility is love in its human form, but love is, above all, kindness. If sensibility is not true compassion which wishes to relieve suffering, true tenderness which wishes to give happiness, and lastly, true affection which is able to go even to sacrifice, it is merely a superficial emotion.

Many, in fact, think that they have sensibility when they are only impressionable. They are above all taken up with themselves. When they see others suffering, they begin to think how they suffer from seeing it, and they pity their own compassion. That kind of sensibility is rather a physiological phenomenon, a nervous disturbance. True sensibility is a moral fact, an impulse of the heart: the former lasts like a transitory vibration, the latter has the permanence of a feeling.

3. *Its influence.*—Sensibility does not temper the will: it appears to be rather capable of enervating it. On the other hand, it seizes the soul so strongly that it calls forth all her powers in pursuit of the end in view. Hence, one often sees wills which are radically weak realize miracles of energy. Devotion amounting to self-sacrifice is one of its triumphs: devotion to little children, and to the suffering and sick; a devotion which is all the more amiable, because it is spontaneous, and all the more striking, because its origin is in the very life of the heart.

If there be a faculty which helps us to will, it is, indeed, this disposition when it is deep. Any teaching which would strip piety of it under the pretext of perfection reminds us of the naturalist who points to a skeleton to show what man is.

Certainly, it is a force, and like every other force, it requires to be brought to bear and to be put on the right road. The seriousness of its deviations will be in proportion to its strength. Anyone who has a great gift of sensibility may do wonders in the way of divine love. He will understand all the better the deepest and finest feelings, and will find for them the sweetest modes of expression. He will ever tend to go forward—provided that he is not turned aside by contrary affections. The power to love wrongly is attached to the power to love at all.

It is true that supernatural love has its seat in the will only, but it easily extends its influence to the domain of sensibility. It animates it, uplifts it, and directs it. In sins, it makes this kind of sensibility feel the bitterness of reproaches and the sweetness of repentance.

4. *Its states.*—Let us now say something of the influence exercised over the will by the two states of moral sensibility which we meet with at every turn of the spiritual life: *consolation* and interior *trial.* Either of them may fortify it: consolation, by the activity which it arouses; and trial, by the effort that it necessitates.

Consolation awakens our faculties and gives them pliancy, and carries them to a high degree of intensity. Then nothing costs too much. "He who loves," says the writer of the *Imitation,* "runs and flies, and knows no impediments." It is a state in which moral sensibility seems to act of itself, carrying away the will, which has only to consent. It comes to us from heaven, like the warmth of the sun, to make the ardour of desire and an abundance of thoughts and a wealth of feelings burst forth like flowers in spring.

Trial is the hill country, swept by winds; it is freezing winter, or the barren desert. You live on what you have laid in store; you protect yourself by prodigies of toil and con-

stancy of effort. The heart must beat quicker ; each nerve and cell must be strained to the utmost ; and all for what ? Apparently, merely to keep alive. But an immense work is silently carried out : the heart becomes stronger, the muscles tougher, and life more potent.

Consolation is the time for beautiful and fine *beginnings :* let us raise our ideal.—It is the season for easy and abundant actions : let us form our habits.—Habit is of the greatest help to the will.

Trial is the time for *willing*. We feel not at all : we seem to have no love—there is nothing to do but to *will* all the finest things we have known ; and then, we have to gather them together, withered perhaps, but still sweet-smelling, and to offer them to God who knows their value ; then, we have to express the feelings, and at any rate the desires, which do not cease to be true : above all, then is the time to *act* with purity, nobility and firmness, to the great benefit of the will, which improves more by acting alone. It is not liking that makes you go forward, but real love, and you have it : appreciative love which puts God above everything ; faithful love which tends towards the object of its choice : " I know not how to tell Him that I love Him, but I will show Him I do." Work is a better proof than an outburst of feeling.

There are weak wills which would not advance without the fairly frequent assistance of consolation. If they need to be borne onward by sensible grace, let them learn how to attract it and how to keep it. The *Imitation* warns us that it is often our own fault if we are stripped of it.

III. The Training of the Will by Mortification

When we are speaking of the will, of efforts, and of tempering the soul, can we pass over in silence that mighty exercise in which the Saints of all the ages have won and renewed their vigour—mortification ?

The mortification we are now considering is not exactly that which protects, but rather that which *stirs one up*. Elsewhere, it is a question of regulating the use of this world's joys, of repressing dangerous passions, and of sacrificing, if need be, our *eye or our right hand :* here we are in search of a principle of strength, and we find it in the use of pain : pain is a *stimulus* and a *sanction*.

I.—Corporal Mortification

St. Francis of Sales teaches that this kind of mortification " awakens the appetite for devotion." What exactitude of expression ! —Taste for the things of God would grow insipid in the long run ; pain, by its bitterness, excites the sacred appetite.—The bruised flesh feels nothing but contempt for the things of this world, and only looks for enjoyment in heaven.—Devotion, left to the calm tenour of its own way, would fall asleep ; pain comes to awaken it. Under its sacred

goad, our faculties begin to show a more decided activity ; prayer grows more insistent ; the will becomes more fully conscious of itself ; for, to face suffering, it must gather together all its energies. At the same time, confidence expands ; have we not in a kind of way become God's creditors ?—Love, too, feels more generosity according to the human principle that the more sacrifices one makes for a person or for a cause, the more one gets attached to it. Thus, this kind of mortification stimulates vitality, gives confidence and detaches us from the world.

People generally advance towards mortification from more simple considerations : it is enough for them to contemplate Jesus suffering. Oh, to follow Him, and to be with Him and like Him ! to alleviate His pain by sharing it ! to make His blood more fruitful by making up what is required of us in the way of personal immolation !—Happy is the mortification which draws its ardour thence : the will thus acquires that temper of combined gentleness and toughness which results from the noblest of feelings.

God cannot see a mortified soul without being touched. It is such a beautiful reflection of the divine sorrows of His Son. The soul is clothed in His red livery, and He can refuse no grace to the precious Blood.

Anyone who does not know how to impose upon himself a few privations in the pleasures

of life, and in his food and amusements and comforts ; anyone who is unwilling to mortify his senses, even if there is no danger to be run, is not fit for the lofty kingdom of perfection.

II.—PENAL MORTIFICATION

Pain may also be looked upon as a *punishment ;* it will then be the sanction* of our shortcomings.

We must take ourselves as we are. But along with our higher feelings, we have a lower side to our nature. There are times when we show ourselves slack, notwithstanding our past zeal ; above all, we are forgetful. Such and such a resolution or practice, such and such a duty even, comes to be given up. A really fervent soul may go so far as to commit real sins ! How is this kind of decadence to be put a stop to ? How is our good-will to be awakened ? How are we to guarantee our perseverance ? By pain imposed as a sanction. And this is why : our nature shrinks from pain ; it flees from it as from destruction (for all pain deprives us of some good). But punishment, by attaching the *thought of suffering* to the thought of evil, makes us hold it in horror. If there were no hell, what would most Christians be like ?

* "Sanction," in the sense of a *legal sanction*, which upholds the authority of a law, and helps to enforce it and secure its fulfilment.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

If there were no prisons, what would become of society? If there were no punishments, where would be the sinews of our education of children? How, then, can our training in piety do without this universally necessary and essentially human means, since there is sin?

III.—THE PRACTICE OF THESE TWO KINDS OF MORTIFICATION

1. Have we fixed our daily mortifications? —To leave one's bed quickly.—A time of silence during the day.—Privations and restraints at meal-times.—A penance before going to bed.

Do we accustom ourselves to certain mortifications for which circumstances afford occasions, for instance: not to make useless complaints when one is unwell, and to show a cheerful expression—to deprive ourselves of some satisfaction of our curiosity, of an amusement or a comfort—to bear a discomfort one could get rid of: an uncomfortable posture, a little cold—to force one's self to be quick in obeying, or in giving pleasure, or in fulfilling a disagreeable duty.—On the other hand, we may *defer* a gratification which we have a right to enjoy, a needed rest, the reading of a letter; check a useless word, a curious look, an excuse not demanded by any duty.

2. As a penalty for our shortcomings, here are the commonest practices: to kiss the ground—to say a prayer with arms outstretched in the form of a cross—to bind one's self to certain privations at the next meal—to curtail one's morning sleep—to recite a certain number of *Aves*, etc.

3. All the above practices are harmless, and only require a little good-will. There are others that go farther. All the Saints, without exception, have made use of them, and generally, have recommended them. (*The Introduction to a devout life.*)

In our days, they are treated as *extraordinary* penances: but this is wrong.—Everyone should see what prudent fervour urges upon him, and then submit his desires to his director.

4. Interior mortification is surely the highest and the most necessary, but, as remarks St. Vincent de Paul, who had an eminently judicious mind: if it is the soul of piety, it cannot do without external mortification, without which it would be a soul without a body.

SECOND CAUSE

Want of Purification

When one tries to find the reason of a certain state of relapse or of the persistent poverty which one sometimes notices amongst many of the devout, one discovers it very often in the insufficiency of their *preliminary purification:* the purification of their views, and the purification of their inclinations.

Relapses are principally due to the influence of unfortunate *inclinations* which have remained too strong: poverty depends rather on want of purity in their *views*.

It will be very advantageous, even to fairly advanced souls, to run through the rapid sketch which we are about to make of these two subjects; for there are very few persons who are entirely pure and free.

Purification is not fervour, it is true, but it is a preliminary *condition* of fervour.

I.—Want of Purification in the Intentions

I

To act ultimately for God is the law of the spiritual life.—Everybody knows the influence of the inclinations on the moral life: that of our views is much less understood. Their relation to our actions is less close and less apparent: and yet, let there be no mistake, our views are the *primary motive* of all our conduct. To have views is to have principles; it is to know in which direction we must go.

A lofty view dominates the whole field of piety, and this is the view of God's rights: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.* Such is the affirmation of the precept; and this is the application of it: *Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do; do all to the glory of God* (St. Paul).

God's interest and glory and good pleasure (which are fundamentally synonymous expressions): such is the incentive that should animate our whole spiritual life, and its influence should extend even to the least of our actions. If our reason recognizes this duty, our nature easily keeps us from doing it. What strikes us instinctively in all

things is the connexion anything may have with our interest or pleasure. This anxiety follows us even into our piety: to live for self comes so natural!

To give God His proper position and to prevent ourselves from any infringement of it, this is the ceaseless work of purity of intention.

To bring out clearly the beauty and the extent of this duty, we shall borrow from St. Ignatius the masterly doctrine which he lays as a foundation at the outset of his *Exercises.*

Man's end: "Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God: such is his end; and in realizing it, he will get to heaven."—It is to be remarked that God is the end of my life, and not immediately my own salvation; hence, far less can it be my own immediate enjoyment. My salvation is no doubt my end, but a secondary end.

The use of creatures: "The other things with which man is surrounded are made to provide him with the means of praising, revering and serving God."—Other things mean: all sorts of goods, joys and sorrows, and occurrences; all that fills up our lives.

The practical rule: "Whence it follows that man must make use of them according as they help on the pursuit of his end; and turn away from them according as they put hindrances in its way . . . *neither more nor less,*" a trenchant and luminous saying!—If

I consider things according as they are pleasing to me, or advantageous or easy, and not according as they *afford me a means* of revering God and of serving Him ; it is myself I am considering ; I go outside of the end laid down for me, and I make the things that are intended for my use depart from their destination also.

The state of mind.—"We ought, then, to *make* ourselves indifferent with regard to everything created (apart from the will of God), so that of ourselves we should have no preference for health or sickness ; for wealth or poverty ; for honour or disgrace ; for a long life or a short one ; and thus for all the rest ; desiring and looking only for those things which are calculated to lead us to the end for which we were created."—To be in this state of mind by a set *resolution* is the right state of the will ; to be in this detachment by long *habit* is the right state of nature, or virtue.—This indifference may be called : an *antecedent* disposition, for it ceases as soon as God's will gives me an object to care for or to love.

II

To act with ourselves in view is the vicious law of our nature.—God's glory, God's interest first : then my view of life is calm, and its direction sure !—hence, *self* rightly passes

into the background. This self is the self of my pride and sensualism and personal gratification ; it is, too, the self of my own interests, though they may be spiritual interests.

Is my notion of duty confined to the low point of view of merely not sinning ?—Is my ideal of perfection limited to a vague intention of avoiding imperfections ? But the source of all imperfectoin is care for self ; and does not my care for self unfortunately fill my whole life ?

It may hide beneath such beautiful phrases as these : My God, I am wholly Thine ! My God, I wish to live only for Thy glory !—This declaration is sincere, but the disposition is often dubious !—You belong to what you desire, to what you are eager about, to what you suffer from ; you are, above all, given up to what you love.

Can I say to myself that I am suffering for God, and that in everything I rejoice in His glory ? Am I really convinced that the things of this world are, above all, steps to mount on my way up to God ? fragments of good, loose and unsteady, which it is my duty to bring back to Him, just as leaves catch the particles of carbon brought to them by the wind, for the good of the tree ?

I feel a shrinking from sickness and poverty and injustice and abandonment. This is quite a natural state of mind, and, in itself, it does not turn me away from God. But if

I allow myself to be engrossed and dominated and guided by these things, then order is disturbed ; and yet, is not this just what I am doing every day ?—Yes, I desire for their own sakes, and far too keenly, esteem and affection and health, a host of things the true value of which is given them by the amount of glory they may bring to God through me.

A few people, especially those who live alone, are very much taken up with the question of their health. Not being torn away from this anxiety by urgent duties or deep affections, they are prone to nurse themselves, are afraid of everything, take their slightest feelings to be threatening symptoms, and end in becoming useless. How are they to have any spirit ?

Others feel moral pain more easily and keenly : no one suffers like them, and no one can understand them.—This very common form of selfishness is not easily recognized by its victims.—Worries of the conscience often are due to this defect, which, indeed, they only serve to increase. By dint of examining into their own dispositions and feelings, these people come to live entirely preoccupied with themselves, and bring to their devotion a soul full of dryness and confusion, and almost always weary and incapable of any higher flights. They like to pity themselves and to be pitied : they weary

the ears of their friends and tire out their directors.

Another danger threatens these poor people. By way of compensation, they easily betake themselves to dangerous gratifications. Fervour is incompatible with such a disposition. How can such unfortunate persons advance? To advance is to go towards God: they merely go towards themselves.

Conclusion.—As long as this is not my habitual view of God; as long as it does not constantly direct me in His ways, I shall be like a person who does not know the road, or like something driven in different directions by two contending currents. I shall be like a wheel which has got out of its adjustment and works badly, and upsets the machinery.

O my God, make me feel the lowness of such of my intentions as are too personal, and the need of elevating them by a more wide-reaching view: Thy glory in all things! —A real revolution must be made in my ideas; I must, indeed, make the supernatural the *directing influence* in my moral life!

I now begin to understand why my virtue is perpetually in a state of mediocrity: I am wanting in the uplifting power of great ideals. God is high, most high. In seeking His glory, I raise myself.—As a creature amidst a host of other creatures, I am indeed, very

low ; I live for myself and for nothingness. —A poor being who has gone out of his way, I run the risk of losing myself amidst a thousand hindrances, of being influenced by thousands of deadly attractions, and, finally, of dying far from my proper end.

The Treatment of this Evil

Order in our Intentions

Do not be astonished at this statement: purification is order. Yes, order restored in our views by the subordination of our *intentions:* order restored in our nature by the equilibrium of our *inclinations.*

We purify our views, when we order our intentions towards their final end, which is God; and then, when we order them according to their secondary ends, which are our duties and also our hopes. We purify our natures, when we establish a wise equilibrium in our inclinations, and even in the faculties in which they reside.

The purification of our views, is order in the *direction* of our spiritual life; the purification of our natures, is order in the *exercise* of this life, or virtue. Now we are dealing only with the intentions.

Note.—The words, *views, motives, intentions,* may here be used indifferently. Nevertheless, views indicate in a more especial manner *what directs;* motives, *what determines;* and intentions, *what one pursues.*

I

THE THEORY OF INTENTION

In reality, it is this that constitutes the morality of an act, since a mistake made in good faith may even be meritorious, and the best of actions may be vitiated by a wrong intention ; it is this, indeed, that determines the nature of the act, which is supernatural only, if it is animated by a supernatural intention.

I. *Direction towards God is necessary to establish order in the spiritual life.*—It is, indeed, this that directs towards their supreme end, and gives their rank, to intermediate ends.

1. First of all, it should be known that every good action goes of itself towards God. This is easily understood if we reflect that it enters into the order laid down by Him, and that it tends to realize His plan ; it is a stone in the vast edifice of the good. But for this stone to enter into this beautiful edifice, it is not enough for it to find a place therein ; it must also be laid consciously, since it is a work of morality. We bring it in this fashion, when we do an action *because* it is good ; on the contrary, we withhold it from the edifice of good, if we do it only because it is agreeable and useful to ourselves.

It is not that our personal good is separated from the general good; on the contrary, these two sorts of good are closely united. Our misfortune lies in having too short a view to take this into account, and our error lies in not referring to our faith which teaches us this. Too often we are dominated by self-interested views, and we are satisfied to ask of each thing: what shall I gain from it?

Besides, thanks to intention, our slightest acts may be clothed with the beauty of several virtues and enriched with their merits. The commonplace work which you are doing from duty, O devout soul, may become an act of faith and obedience, an act of hope and growth, an expiation for yourself and for the redemption of souls, and an act of love with its inestimable perfections: a thing complete, full and bright with spiritual vitality!

2. In order to produce such an efflorescence, intention must not be one of those empty formulas which habit puts in the mind as well as on the lips. It must be a real, if not a conscious, feeling; a portion of life, which passes from the soul into the action. To exclaim in a routine manner and without any conviction: My God, this is for Thee and Thy love! is not an intention, but a mere formula. Though once living, to-day it is only a dead feeling, a withered flower!

Motive is a force which is able to determine

a motion. If it is not that, it has no claim to its name (motive = that which moves). But not every motive which is adduced can be expected to bring with it all the force needed by the act; it is enough if it contributes towards it, and it can always do so by adorning the act and making it more easy; this is what happens in the case of duties which we have already decided to do, and in the case of those which please us.

To introduce into such actions such ideas as are highest and most affecting, is to live more fully; it is to practise virtues in an eminent manner and to train one's self in them, and it increases one's merits indefinitely; it is to be more like God, who has ever in mind all possible views of the good.

Nevertheless, it is important to recall this remark of St. Francis of Sales: you are free to invite such and such people to your table; but when they are once there, you have no right to refuse to give them their proper rank. The motives of hope, for instance, are very good, and, in many cases, we have a right not to rise formally to the level of love and charity, but then let us not say to God: this is for my salvation, and *then*, it is *also* to please Thee! This would be to make Him second to our own interests.

3. Intention must animate our act, as we have seen, but it is enough if it animate our act with its *virtual influence*. We do a host

of things *in virtue of* a determination already taken and no longer present to our minds. We are quite responsible for any evil that we do in these conditions !

We may believe that God has implanted this life-giving principle in the simple fulfilment of the great command to love. If we give a tree, do we not give the fruit it brings forth ? Acts of love in our daily prayers also renew this offering ; and temptations resisted will provide it with opportunities for affirming itself clearly. Hence, the life of a devout person is constantly animated by love reigning in the depths of the heart ; each of his acts is penetrated with it and adorned by it. Add to this that God is inclined to love everything in the soul He loves, and you will understand how far the influence of piety may go.

Venial sin only withdraws from this virtuality the act of sin itself ; but it would weaken its general influence, since it gives more or less preponderance for a time to contrary intentions. That is why it is important to react against it.

II. *The final direction of our intentions towards God realizes the True, the Lovely and the Good.*—1. This is *Truth.* In fact, when I reflect, I at once infer that all that is must gravitate towards the Being by whom it is.—I understand that the Infinite could have for Himself, and could assign to His creatures,

no other end than Himself.—I feel that the perfect Being is necessarily the ideal towards which I must tend with all my heart.—Finally, I acknowledge that God, who must be the object of my happiness in heaven, must be the object of my endeavours here below.

2. And how *beautiful* is this soaring upwards of one so insignificant as myself towards the Infinite One of whose secret thoughts I obtain a glimpse! I catch a glimpse of them, without being able to understand them, but not without being able to love them. Is it not enough for them to be His thoughts in order to be great; and is it not enough for me to cling to them by intention to make them my own?

Who wills the good belonging to an action has a right to will all the good that it involves; but it contains not only its own immediate good and the more remote good which I can perceive, but also all the kinds of good which God Himself can look for from it. Everyone sees in alms-giving the relief of the poor; but God sees in it also the love which inspires it, the disinterestedness that makes room for it, the zeal that accompanies it, the human brotherhood resulting from it, and a host of other goods which are partly revealed by attentive consideration, and, in addition to all these, thousands of other goods which heaven holds in store to surprise us with.

O devout soul, to enter into all these grand things, you have only to say with sincerity and piety : O my God, Thine be all the glory, and I do it for all the intentions which are Thine ! What a dazzling prospect ! Keep on, keep on for ever, O devout soul ; extend your views : never will they be as far-reaching as those of God : unite yourself to His views, to all His views ; and thus will your intentions soar upwards, participating in the life of intelligence and love and wisdom, which is in Him, and at last lose themselves in some measure in the Infinite !

He who, in his recollection, goes over his motives for loving God, is like a child who, from a distance, thinks of his parents and of all the reasons he has for holding them dear : he recalls his childhood, and pictures to himself the absent home, and, from afar, rejoices in all the gladness of the time of his return.

3. The learned only know pity according to the ideas they have formed of it, and make it a reproach against it that it is merely founded upon self-interest. That this interest may be lofty, since it is heaven's wish ; that it may help one to making sacrifices for others, since it makes men despise present goods ; that it may wonderfully sustain virtue—all this they grant, but they add : good is only good, when it is done for its own sake.

And pray, is not this just what the spiritual teaching of the Church proclaims, the very teaching we are now explaining? Is not *the Good* the very thing that Christian virtue seeks for first of all? And for it, the Good is not a mere abstraction, it is the Good in its purity and fulness, because God is the Good essentially, the most worthy end we can aim at: in Him we pursue every human good, because He intends all possible good, and it tends to His glory! The love of God, indeed, becomes one with the love of the Good, and is differentiated, according to circumstances, into acts of patience and self-sacrifice and zeal and self-denial and tenderness; we love, and love more purely and broadly, and with more constancy; we love all things and love ourselves for the same higher motive, the glory of God; we go out of ourselves and enter into Him to live with His feelings!

Further, see what practical wisdom there is in a perfect soul: every duty takes its place and is done in due proportion; desires are no longer feverish, and disappointments no longer overwhelming.

III.—*Direction towards God gives its bearing to the life of action and sanctifies it.*—Our view of doing things for God must entirely dominate all our other views, and our intention must carry with it towards His glory the whole series of our actions.

To have these views constantly present in our minds, and to live almost entirely by them, is a special grace which cannot be laid down as a universal law of perfection. But without living solely *by God*, we can live truly *for Him*.

1. Everyone who is perfect gives Him his intelligence and time and heart, and tastes and joys of all kinds. It is for Him to dispose of them according to His good pleasure. He may say to one : stay near Me, and pour out all the sweet savours of thy heart at My feet. To another, He may suggest to offer Him this sweet sacrifice by using His intelligence and heart and time and likings for the good of his fellows. Is it not, indeed, necessary that new beings should come into existence, and be cherished and protected and trained for heaven ? Must not society as well as the family receive service and help ? Will the divine love so wholly engross the perfect that their hearts will be dead to the bitter cries of moral and physical misery ? Are these not the cries of GOD'S children, and has not GOD created hearts to thrill with motherly tenderness ? (see further on, *Attractions*).

2. But, if some are much taken up with family, social, and charitable duties, they are, as a matter of fact, directed towards their neighbours. They live for others. Parents, friends, the unfortunate, and sinners become

the immediate end of their activity, the chief object of their thoughts.

Is it not, then, to be feared that they will give God a lower place? No, indeed: for there always remains the atmosphere in which we can act; we can love: this is the bracing atmosphere in which we can breathe all the time.—There remains, too, the light which continues to fall from heaven to guide the eye that seeks and the hand that acts.—There remains the higher love, to which we would sacrifice all the rest; a love shed abroad, which we may find in our neighbour with delight!

And shall we ourselves be lowered? Let not that be an objection, provided that God be glorified! Did not St. Paul wish to be anathema for the sake of his brethren?—Still, no! living for others makes use of our strong inward attractions, develops admirable qualities, and exposes us to the most painful crosses. Such a life may be a prolonged act of love!

It is true that duty, affection, and work often engage our attention and service and tender feelings; and that, when the time for prayer comes, our unhappy minds, being distracted by a host of importunate memories, cannot so easily ascend to God or stay at His feet.—And we smite our breasts!—Who can tell how much love is involved in this regret which will come back again to-morrow, a

regret which is no remorse ?—To leave God for God—is not this to love Him just as much, but in another manner ? Is it not often a way of immolating ourselves for Him in the most painful fashion ?—Elsewhere, we will speak of love for our neighbour ; what we are trying to disengage here is purity of intention in this love. This love is not the enemy. The eternal hindrance is the love of ourselves !

3. God has given us no special commandment to love ourselves. Yet such a commandment exists : it is in the order of things. But what would be the use of promulgating it ? Has it not life and vigour enough ? The Gospel makes it practically consist in self-denial ; and any system of morals, which does not put this at its foundations, is bound to go to ruin. The enemy of purity of intention in the love of one's neighbour is an excessive desire for esteem, vain self-satisfaction in one's own success, irritation at meeting with hindrances, looking for one's own satisfaction, and wanting gratitude.

In sacrificing yourself in service, O devout soul, do not be afraid of robbing God, and of getting into a lower sphere ; fear only one thing—self-seeking !

II

THE PRACTICE OF THIS PURIFICATION

1.—Wisdom in the Use of Motives

1. It may be thought that in stripping ourselves of self-seeking we should deprive ourselves of initiative and become depressed. Such a result could only arise from an error. *Subordination* is not suppression : on the contrary, it is securing the beneficent use that makes perfect ; it is getting rid of the abuses that cause suffering. A life ruled by divine views will ever grow and expand.

This divine view ought not to keep the mind perpetually on the strain, but should be an *honest determination*, under the influence of which we come and go, act, love, enjoy, suffer, and live our lives, as God has given them to us. Nothing is changed in fact ; only there is a little more sunshine over our heads, a little more assurance in our hearts : we are obedient satellites, moving smoothly in the orbit of a great world ; we act nobly, and are aware of it ; we prepare the way for our future happiness, and enter into it already by hope.

2. From the fact that supernatural motives are far higher than those of a human character, we must not conclude that the latter can be neglected. They have their own

worth, and govern certain duties. They help on the completeness of our training, and could not be replaced by other motives : such are—love of family and country, friendship, admiration of the beautiful, dignity, and the like. God has implanted them in our nature, and they are necessary to the order He has set up, and such feelings readily lend themselves to being infused with supernatural motives.

3. Among these supernatural motives that of divine love is indisputably the most excellent ; but must it therefore annul all the rest, for instance, fear and hope ? God does not allow it to be so in this world. Fear and hope remain duties whilst man is exposed to evil and on the way towards his destiny ; they bring to divine charity the help of their timely impressions, and tend to become closely united with it in the desire to possess God.

NOTE.—Should the following terms be regarded as synonymous ?—*God's glory*, *will*, and *good pleasure ?* They possess the same value, but answer to different points of view : God's glory looks to the *end*,—His will, to the *universal law*,—His good pleasure, to His *preferences* and satisfaction.—Each of them manifests a special order of feeling, and to consider them separately fructifies the life of prayer.

II.—Degrees in Purity of Intention

Rodriguez lays down the three following :

First degree : such a complete detachment from the things of *this world* as to make us take our satisfaction, not in them, but in God's glory.

Second degree : such a complete detachment from *self* as to make us lose in some sort our own interests and find our satisfaction, not in our virtues, gifts and progress, but in the glory they bring to God.

Third degree : here the soul is stripped of all personal views and thinks less of pleasing God than of feeling that He *finds His pleasure in her*.—To desire to please, and to desire to give pleasure, are two feelings which are very distinct in themselves and of very unequal value, but not at all opposed to one another. *To please* is to attract attention to one's self ; *to give pleasure* is to give joy. Love feels them both : but the purest love specially clings to the latter, though it welcomes the former as a pleasant auxiliary and as a natural complement.

III.—An Easy Method of Purifying Our Intentions

I. After recollecting yourself deeply, hear your divine Master saying to you, yes, to your very self, this word : " If thou wilt

follow Me, renounce everything and thyself. —Wilt thou do this ?"

Yes, Lord, I will, indeed.

Then let us make a list of thy possessions : lay all thy goods at My feet, and hide not one of them.—Thus I shall be able to see those that are good for thee, and thou shalt take them back from My hands.

Lord, I hold strongly to my position ; I am accustomed to it, and it is also indispensable to me. — However, I give it Thee.

Lord, my health is very needful to me ; it enables me to act and to be useful. What would become of me, if I were ill ? No matter, Lord, here is my health.

Lord, such and such persons are infinitely dear to me ; they are my support and consolation ; I owe them everything. I should suffer deeply, if I were to lose them or to lose their affection. But, be it as Thou wilt : I give them Thee.

Lord, I feel strongly the value of the esteem of those about me : it encourages me. Success uplifts me, and failure repels me. But, do with my success and esteem what Thou wilt, as with my affections : I give them Thee.

Lord, I like so dearly to feel that Thou lovest me. Consolation in my prayers and Communions draws me nearer Thee. What would become of me, if I were to ex-

perience long periods of dryness and to be without any sensible love? This felt love which I like so dearly, O dear Lord, I offer it Thee.

Go on with this sincere enumeration and filial offering. Try, indeed, to find out what you hold most dear, and separate yourself from it in thought.

II. When this process of renunciation is over, the time has come for making a choice. You will then go through each of your offerings to *read in the eyes of your dear Lord* what He pleases to give back to you.—Give this your close and keen attention: be discreet and simple.

You will doubtless take back most of these goods; but receiving them from God's hands, you will feel that they are less your own, and you will use them with more detachment, more sureness, and perhaps, with more happiness.—You will notice some excessive attachments, and you will disavow them. You will cut off altogether all that is wrong, and, as far as possible, all that is imperfect.

Then say at the end: Jesus, art Thou satisfied? Have I really renounced everything and myself? Wilt Thou have me amongst Thy followers?

II.—WANT OF PURIFICATION IN OUR INCLINATIONS

The will, touched by grace, now turns towards higher things ; but nature still keeps its tendency towards lower things.

But these inclinations, which always have a lower side, are both contrary *forces*, and unwholesome *ferments*.

Considered as forces, they are like currents, and they carry away our liberty ; considered as ferments, they set in motion thoughts and desires that poison the soul.—If these contrary forces are not broken, if these deadly poisons are not eliminated, our spiritual life is injured in its very principles, and tends to decrease, not to increase. This is what we shall show in the rapid analysis that follows. It will deal with unhappy inclinations which very frequently persist in those who are as yet not very far advanced.

I. *The inclination to inferior pleasures.*—We are still fond of rest, external amusements, the common pleasures of the table, and anything exquisite in the way of sensible affections ; we read anything that is interesting ; we try to be comfortable ; we satisfy our tastes and senses ; we try to make our life an easy one.

This does not mean that we will not deny ourselves when conscience demands it ; but

we do it reluctantly and without any spirit. We have an air of trying to do God a favour! Besides, these sacrifices are only passing affairs: we let slip a good many of them, and many we do not even see the need of. Thus it is that we leave our nature with a root of sensualism in it, and with inclinations which are contrary to virtue.—We are ready to parley with conscience, to give ourselves as much lawful latitude as possible. Such argument is the most active solvent of spiritual vigour. Let us bear well in mind, that as soon as any obligation is disputed, it is compromised.

Such souls are not exactly sick, since they do not wish to sin; but they are sickly, because they are still permeated with bad ferments.

NOTE.—If such tendencies are more marked, refer to what was said in Vol. I. (*Deterioration of the spiritual life*, pp. 127 and 140).

II. *The excessive desire for esteem.*—Anyone who is pious has a perfect right to desire that esteem which is given to any honourable person. There is no disorder in this, since he does not pretend to raise himself above others; nor is it a danger, for such a desire awakens no bad feelings.

It is quite otherwise with the desire for *especial* esteem. Such a desire easily takes possession of anyone, and disturbs and dis-

organizes, if it is rather excessive ; it leads one to run down others and to be wanting in charity, and even in justice, towards them ; it keeps up painful irritation and gives one over to unbecoming pleasures. In the state of spiritual life that is not yet perfect, this desire may be keenly felt and become a real hindrance.

You gave yourself up with real pleasure to exercises of piety ; you often thought of God ; and your communions were sweet—but you get to hear that you are spoken against, that someone has no great opinion of your good qualities, or that you are thought rather inefficient. The disappointment takes away all your gladness ; your union with God is interrupted ; your mind is harassed with all sorts of vexations ; it begins to analyse and examine and to draw a host of inferences — alas ! you are no longer your own !

Nevertheless, in endeavouring to react, you repudiate all this rebellion, and you propose to be more humble. You go so far as to thank God for the trial, and you are sincere.—Yes, you are sincere, and yet, the resentment will revive to-morrow and disturb you again ; new occasions will soon arise to overexcite your sensitiveness. But, in this way, you suffer constant agitation, because you have not within you the *power* which keeps away or kills temptation—the

virtue of humility. The love of esteem remains eager and exacting in spite of you, and without your being altogether conscious of it.—Here purification is not finished : the evil principle remains, and produces these indispositions and fevers and disorders.

Vain self-complacency as to our good qualities or success comes from the same principle, and produces the same effects. This disposition induces, sooner or later, the common and demoralizing evil which is so well known to spiritual directors : discouragement. Without knowing it, you were living on yourself : you found the stimulus for your activity in the pleasure of knowing that you were held in esteem ; and your confidence was founded on a conviction of your own merits.

But all that is frail, and more than frail : it is vain, and without foundation. In God alone all our confidence must dwell.

III. *Affections and aversions.*—How is it with you as to affections which attach you to certain people ? Are they well placed ? Are they not too keen and exacting ? Do they not give rise to worry and preoccupation ? Or do they give you the calm and joy which are improving ? Do your parents, and friends more or less closely associated with you in your earthly pilgrimage, help you to tend towards God, either by the attraction of their virtue, or because your heart is

touched and stirred by their need ; in a word, do you really feel that you love with not only your own heart, as no doubt you do, but also with God's heart ?

Do you not still keep up some of your aversions to a more or less degree ? Do they not often obsess you ? Do they not give rise to feelings and words and actions which are contrary to charity, or, at any rate to good understandings ? Do you not feel that you have some remains of bitterness and dissatisfaction, which create such bad dispositions for prayer and for a proper feeling towards God ? (See what is said on this subject in Vol. I.)

IV. *Likings and repugnances which are too much deferred to.*—Perfection does not require us not to have likings and repugnances ; it only desires that they should not be hindrances. Hence, it is necessary that they should be ruled and obedient : but neither must they hamper the path of our advancement by perpetually cropping up. To repulse an enemy is to hinder him from doing any practical harm ; it is not to be delivered from him.

Many persons allow themselves to be more or less governed by their likings and repugnances. They take up such and such a duty with eagerness, because it pleases them ; while another, because they dislike it, is neglected or omitted. They will receive a

counsel or a reprimand with a good grace; but from one person, and not from another. As their impressions constantly change, to-day they will be all fire and flames for something they will not look at to-morrow; because it no longer pleases them.

It is above all in the trials of the life of piety that this disposition becomes really dangerous for such souls. When the feeling of liking departs, they are then disconcerted; they think everything is compromised, and everything seems to them impracticable; they will even persuade themselves that God is abandoning them. Through their unfortunate habit of acting according to their likings and repugnances, they have not the strength to force themselves to duties which have no longer any attraction for them. One would think them quite unaware that virtue knows nothing of modifications occurring in the feelings only; or rather, they know it, but only theoretically and in a superficial manner, so that it does not reassure or encourage them.

If we are not literally governed by our likings and repugnances, let us ask ourselves whether we are not considerably influenced by them. Not to be so, one must have God's rights habitually in view, and an uncommon amount of indifference to self.

V. *Curiosity and caprice.*—Again, let us examine ourselves as to curiosity and caprice.

Curiosity is contrary to divine union and serious thoughts ; it makes us live out of ourselves and lowers us. Owing to it, many dangers threaten purity, charity, and prudence. Some pious people, with little to do or without much charity, fall into this defect.

Want of order causes us to lose time and sometimes compromises the gravest interests ; but from the point of view which we are specially considering, it gives rise to vagueness and caprice. Vagueness hinders any effective resolution ; caprice makes us lose the sense of God's will, and gives us over to inconstancy.

Summing up.—You acknowledge that you have no taste for the things of the spiritual life, or else that your early ardour has fallen off ; it costs you something to fulfil certain duties and pious practices ; and you say : I make no progress, though I really know not why, for I have good-will.—Look well at the question of purification.

See if your soul is healthy and free : if you are wanting in purification, you will have in you some sort of lingerings of conscupicence and unfortunate tendencies. What is required to make them rise to the surface under the form of temptation, or at least in the shape of disturbance ? Simply an occasion, a thought, a recurrence of old habit.

Miasmas arise in our nature of their own

accord, just as they do from swamps. How will it be if the senses, the imagination, and desires raise them in their imprudence.

What a wise thing it is to make one's soul healthy and free! If that is not done, struggles are certain and relapse probable.

The Treatment of this Evil

order in our inclinations

I. *Their raison-d'être.*—Our views are our ideas, but our inclinations are *our nature*, whether inherited or acquired. Good inclinations sway us gently in the direction of the good; unhappy inclinations urge us towards evil.

We are tormented with our sins; we groan over their persistency: and we remain indifferent to the defects that give rise to them. We do not take the trouble to get a thorough knowledge of them. We attack them at haphazard and feebly, with such intermittence as permits them to recover.

Their influence is very considerable because it is *continuous;* it is there to pounce upon any occasion. If it be possible in an hour's meditation to reform one's views entirely, it is only by prolonged effort that one can reform one's tendencies.

In our state of fallen nature, our tendencies go to excess in the direction of sensible things and of things present. The senses, if badly guarded, fill us with disturbing feelings. Imagination, memory, impressionableness, if left free, saturate us with thoughts and desires and reveries—and these do not go towards God.

Let us, however, be on our guard against

exaggerating, and let us not say too much against our inclinations. In themselves, most of them have their *raison d'être:* they lead us to provide for the various purposes of our existence and make easy, and even agreeable to us, the very onerous duties which would never be carried out without this attraction. The whole of our inclinations makes up our moral nature.

II. *Their direction.*—Is it possible in practice to change our nature? Further, is it desirable? Every nature is made up of combined elements which, in general, harmonize together on one basis. To wish to arrange them all after a common type would be to destroy numerous elements of energy and beauty; it would often be forcing what is like delicate machinery.—Have you a lively nature? Then, keep your lively nature, but without its precipitancy and imprudence; be spontaneous with a certain wise circumspection.—If you have a loving disposition, you could have nothing better: but pray direct it rightly, keep good watch over it, and, if need be, check it; but especially let it have wholesome affections—and so on with the rest.—We carry our temperament with us in our conception of virtue as well as in the practice of it: we are ourselves, and ourselves we must remain: virtue is our *nature cultivated.*

To *direct one's self* is to direct one's bent,

not to suppress it ; just as to *reform one's self* is not to lower one's self. Consider it well ; the intensity of any movement is proportioned to the forces which determine it ; but, in our movement towards perfection, if grace is the primary force, nature is the secondary one.

III. *Wise reservations.*—Here is a remark which is painful in itself, but which is really consoling for those who feel their imperfections :—our defects cannot always be cured ! There are some that have such deep roots in us that we shall have to endure them all our lives. But nevertheless, we can render them *harmless.* And what is more, if we know how to take them, we shall be able to extract from them wonders in the way of fervour. When we are too weak in one direction, we shall summon *other* virtues to our aid. We shall prudently take more care to put ourselves in *favourable conditions.*—Knowing that God's power is at the disposition of our prayers, we shall call upon His aid *more urgently ;* and lastly, by all the means entrusted to our neediness, we shall become more virtuous.

Their esteem for supernatural things leads some devout people to make little of *human qualities.* This is not a matter of reasoning, but of impressions : the result is nevertheless unfortunate. A kindly and rather liberal spirit,—evenness of disposition,—cordiality,

—sympathy with the woes of others,—the desire of procuring others this world's pleasures,—politeness which is characterized with ease and distinction—all these constitute not only indispensable means for zeal, but they are also precious resources for devotion, since they are useful as a basis for virtues, and give them solidity and a natural facility. Thus, in a thoroughly well-educated person, you will find more refinement and elevation ;—cordiality is the beginning of an impulse towards charity ;—a broad mind is a protection against a carping spirit ;—evenness of disposition tends towards peacefulness ;—and so it is with the rest.

NOTE.—Here should follow a study on our defects. It would be full of interest and importance. (We hope some day we may be able to publish one which we gave up as being too lengthy.) Our inclinations ought to be classed, analyzed, and followed up in their deviations, and finally, some hints should be given for their direction. Here we will only refer the reader to the part of the examination of conscience which has to do with *our duties towards ourselves.*

THIRD CAUSE

Want of Peace

It is not enough to be generous and purified ; to be active we must also be *at peace.* Without peace, one goes forward like a traveller who has lost his way, and who dissipates his strength in looking for his road in all directions : sometimes he hurries onward and gets exhausted ; sometimes he flings down his burden and comes to a standstill.

There is a want of peace which comes from our sins or defects. Sins and defects are a disorder, and every disorder disturbs peace. The reason of this is that our sins and defects come into conflict with some moral law ; but, as we have seen, moral laws are the guardians of order in things spiritual, just as physical laws are in things material.

Moreover, this want of peace has its providential part to play ; it is a *warning* against evil, like any uneasiness ; and what is more, it is the beginning of a *reaction* towards the good, as is fever towards health.—It calls forth our attention and efforts.

The want of peace, which we here give as a cause which is *specially* paralyzing to spiritual activity, is not the kind abovementioned : it does not come from our sins, nor exactly from our defects : but rather

from certain *moral imperfections*. The soul may lose her peace : 1. by *excess of activity* which throws her into eagerness ; 2. by an *excess of sensitiveness* which predisposes her to contraction ; 3. by *errors of conscience* which deliver her over to scrupulosity.— Eagerness, contraction of spirit, and scrupulosity are all opposed to progress, but in different ways : the first by dissipating our strength, the two others by killing it.

Further on, as for the want of effort and for the want of purification, the remedy will be shown in one profound general view : that of *universal submission*. Eagerness *does not wait* for God's just initiative : contraction *does not submit* to the troubles and abjection permitted by divine Providence : and scrupulosity *refuses* the authority appointed by God's wisdom. Universal submission means universal peace : it mean's God's rule.

The First Cause of the Want of Peace

EAGERNESS

God has conceived from all eternity the vast plan which is being fulfilled in the course of the ages. He has determined it as a whole and in its least details. He has even foreseen the incessant restorations which our faults necessitate.

What do we know of this almost infinite plan? What can we foresee of the distant consequences of a single action throughout the whole? What will be ultimately most advantageous, we know not!

Thus, the two *rôles* become admirably clear: *God's* is the initiative, ours is submissive co-operation.

Eagerness substitutes our personal initiative for God's. It thus misunderstands His part, which is a wrong; and it puts us in defective conditions, which is a disorder that is full of disastrous consequences.

I. *Its nature.*—Here we are about to deal with *spiritual eagerness*. This study is of the highest importance, since St. Francis of Sales accuses this defect of being the *destruction of devotion*.

It is a kind of *haste* which does not take proper account of the conditions of life. No sooner is an end proposed than we desire to see it attained. Difficulties prove discon-

certing, and we have no patience or justice in dealing with ourselves.—We pray, and want to be answered immediately.—Or, are we practising some virtue? Then we are astonished to find out, very soon, that we are still wanting in it.—We have made some good resolution; we break it, and reproach ourselves bitterly.—We should easily begin to find fault with God Himself, since, after all, He might have given us these virtues and prevented these faults!

II. *Its causes.*—Like all our defects, the root-cause of this one lies in our natural predisposition. A quick temperament, in its activity, is easily irritated by having to wait, and by hindrances. An exacting spirit makes for itself numerous subjects for discontent.—In the same situation, one person will be in eager haste, while another will remain quite calm.

Certain *impetuous* natures cannot put up with any impediment to their zealous desires for perfection. They want to carry every obstacle by a frontal attack. Others, who are also full of activity, but above all *curious*, are constantly on the look out for means of perfection without ever arriving at any result. They do not take time to assimilate what they take in. They read one book after another, and hear sermons upon sermons, and ask questions upon questions as to their spiritual life and the state of their soul. All

that they read or hear passes over them like a whirlwind which bewilders them. True reflection, true prayer and true confidence in God are absent from all this eagerness. No view becomes settled, no definite resolution is taken, and no improvement is achieved.

All these restless inquiries only help to sustain a vain sort of complacency, which ends by becoming a factitious need. St. Paul long ago knew these fussy souls: *Semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes*, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

There are those who, like Martha, cannot rest at Jesus' feet. For them, there are only external works, and they give themselves up to them to such an extent that they live apart from God. The wrong they do to themselves is sometimes irreparable, for certain habits of recollection are easily lost and regained with difficulty; and the good of others, for which all these sacrifices are made, is far from profiting by them, for usually our influence is proportioned to our virtue.

III. 1. *Its kinds.*—The most culpable kind of eagerness is that which *refuses* to accept divine indications, or which disdains to wait for them. Do we not know what we ought to do? Do we not even give counsel to others?—We do not say so, but we think so. —This sort of conscience is *presumptuous* in the proper sense of the word, a kind of

rigidity of will : in reality, it is *pride.* This contrariety is most naturally found in those who have to govern.

2. There is another sort of eagerness which is less odious ; it is that which does not give time for enquiry, namely, *precipitation.* It sometimes comes of levity which does not even think of reflecting, sometimes of impetuosity which carries one away. This kind of eagerness does not last, and is also without rigidity ; that which comes of pride is harsh and obstinate.—Each one must bring his efforts to bear upon the defect, which, in his case, gives rise to eagerness.

3. Eagerness is rather *accidental* when it comes mainly of the passion of a moment : a feverish desire to succeed, impatience to get well, excessive affection, etc. Under such impressions, the thought of God gets submerged and does not count : all one's powers are concentrated upon the end in view.

IV. *Its characteristics.*—Here are the marks by which to recognize eagerness.—*Before :* something feverish. A pungency of irritation rising against anticipated or merely possible difficulties.—Ingenuity in worrying one's self.—A certain rigidity of determination. *After :* always some want of large-heartedness and freedom.—If one has met with success, one is less satisfied than one hoped.—Failure causes vexation, and the

memory of opposition encountered leaves bitterness.

V. *Its effects.*—An eager person is devoured with impatience at being checked by some material impossibility, by sickness, or by duties opposed to his likings.—*But even that he will put up with.* But if his helplessness comes from his being held to be unequal to the work, or because someone else is entrusted with what his zeal made him hope for, he is quite upset! A host of bad feelings arise. He no longer understands God, and feels a grudge against his fellows. His eagerness has stirred up all the mud which lies hid in the depths of man's soul.

VI. The *pretext* for spiritual eagerness is usually love of the good. We never love the good too much, it is true; but we may wish to attain it too soon, or in a fuller way than circumstances admit of.

To know the good depends upon the mind, which is able to look far beyond our resources. To admire it depends upon our æsthetic sense; but to demand it, and to desire it at all costs, is an act of will, a choice. But our choice ought to depend neither on our ideas, nor on our admiration, but upon God's will. Eager desires become real passions; they forestall the reason, and prevent it from judging rightly; they transfigure things by giving them beauties and advantages which they do not possess; and lastly, they fill us with

agitation, give rise to trouble, and store up for us discouraging surprises.

Eagerness is always apt to be exclusive, for it becomes wrapped up in what it pursues—it is obstinate, since it sees nothing but that, —and nevertheless inconstant, for what is not settled by God is essentially changeable. By urging on the soul too far, it exposes her to a recoil, which is to some extent demoralizing.

VII. The *great harm* of spiritual eagerness is that it anticipates grace : this is a disorder, for grace must be the first principle of our determinations.—It is a fundamental cause of impotence, for grace alone can give success.

A certain amount of disappointments invariably follow this defect, and then agitation is succeeded by discontent, disturbance and, finally, discouragement.—Oh, how much better a companion is peace !

The Treatment of this Evil

THE SPIRIT OF HOLY DEPENDENCE

Eagerness substitutes human initiative for that of God ; it does not take time to look for the latter, does not wait to get to know it, and pursues its own way. Although it is generally unconsciously made, this substitution is none the less counter to God's rights and to the good order of things ; it comes about, moreover, through the influence of our defects, and thereby involves our responsibility ; let us, then, try to find the remedies for assuaging this fever, which rages particularly at the beginning of the life of piety. We shall find them in the two following methods.

FIRST METHOD

Combat

It comprises different practical means.

1. The first consists in setting one's self free from the *defects* which give rise to eagerness : pride, or rather, presuming on one's skill or talents ; levity, that takes a shallow view of everything ;—impetuosity, which jumps to decisions too quickly. It would take too long to follow up these various subjects in detail.

2. What we have just said as to defects also applies to *desire*. Desire is essentially a

principle of movement, and this movement becomes excited as soon as desire gets to be rather excessive. Then it engrosses us and hides from us God's action ; it urges us on and makes us follow our own feeling. Our personal tastes and our own immediate interests become the deciding factors. God's will is no longer our light and guide and aim. —" We should will little, and only to a small extent anything but God," says St. Francis of Sales.

3. The third remedy consists in a *wise deliberateness*. The older one grows, the more one feels the need of this. Time is a great power which silently works on our behalf. Allow it to dissipate the clouds that hide the horizon ; allow it to calm the interior agitation which hinders us from reaching the decisive conclusion. Allow the wheel of circumstance to bring favourable conditions within your reach.

SECOND METHOD

Union

These practical means will do for most people. But some desire to rise higher and to reach truth at its source ; but this source is no other than a deep knowledge of *God's action*, the primary and necessary cause of every act. Let us show them that to unite freely with it is the most perfect and delightful submission ; the gentlest of deaths for eagerness.

I.—God's Action—What it is

Men's wonder would be great if they came to discover suddenly God's universal and incessant action on nature, on events, and on themselves. The primary and essential principle of every being, the Creator is the primary and essential principle of every act. Not an atom moves, but God sets it in motion; not a thought arises in our minds, but God shapes it. But if He animates both matter and mind, He does not animate them all *alike*. He directs each creature according to its nature: the material world in a sovereign manner, without making any demand upon its own consciousness, and the world of spirits with respect, inviting their free co-operation. "*In Him we live and move and be.*" If He wishes us to do any act, He commences it; if we enter on any course, He is with us to the end. Every act is full of Him, but remains our own because we co-operate in it. This is not only taught us by our faith, but it is also granted by philosophy. Why is it ignored by so many?

II.—God's Action—How to apprehend it

In practice, God's action upon us is identified with His will: to know the one is, then, to know the other.

That the Lord has a will as to everything ; that this will, which is wise and good, must be the certain rule of all that is good, this is easily conceived ; but what is less understood is that it can be known. God, indeed, does not give His orders in an audible voice ; He remains as dumb as He is invisible. St. Paul represents man as groping after Him amidst the darkness ; and it is in the same way that we anxiously seek to find out His will. Yet His will is sufficiently made known to us, if we are careful to attend. This condition is part of our duty, and of our virtues and merits.

1. God manifests His will to us by His *commandments*, which create certain duties. Duty is a corner of His plan which He reveals to us ; a part of His work which He entrusts to us. Very foolish is he who looks round to see if there is not some better part to take ! Deceived by appearances, he would be leaving his Master's choice for his own. Generally, duty is not loved well enough ; it is less thought of than some optional work, as if God had not given commands exactly as to what is most important. A soldier at a post, where he thinks that he is useless, perhaps holds in his faithfulness the fate of a battle. The mistake arises from our understanding better our own choice. The merit of obedience is precisely that of preferring to our own well-known choice that

of God, since the well-founded goodness of the latter escapes our observation.

2. God manifests His will to us sufficiently by certain signs, the finding of which is left to our diligence. In a way He gives us signs *by means of circumstances*. This conclusion follows from the principle that nothing happens but by His orders or by His permission. Being placed in the midst of His plan which is in process of being fulfilled, we yield to the pressure of events ; we choose the issue that seems to us the best ; we act, or submit, according to circumstances. If we do this with God's glory before our eyes, we shall follow nothing else ; whilst, if we are taken up with our own likings and interests, our sight will be dimmed and we shall lose our way. Whatever circumstances demand and counsel us to do, that is what God demands and advises. Let us bless them when they are imperative ; and, instead of dwelling upon the difficulties in which they involve us, let us greet in them God's will which is working for our good, perhaps in our own despite.

3. He has also another way of speaking, more intimate and equally sure, if it be well checked, and this is by an inward call, by *attraction*.

This rule is founded on the principle that a wise being makes the dispositions He gives harmonize with the end which He assigns.

Interior attraction, when it comes from God, is, then, in harmony with what God wills for us. This infallible discernment, this wonderful sense, which, in the animal kingdom, is called instinct, is replaced in us by attraction, which, being more respectful for our dignity, leaves us free to consult our reason, and the merit of being guided by it.

If God manages outwards circumstances to invite us, He stirs within us attractions to urge us onward. A pure, calm, and penetrating attraction can only come from Him.

4. By the side of attraction, which is an impulse towards some general end, we recognize another impulse from God, that which specially belongs to each act, and which is called the *inspiration of the good.* All good thoughts and desires, and all healthy remorse, are as much God's action as heroic inspirations. Do not expect to feel it ; it usually acts like the vital principle, which, without revealing its presence, makes our blood circulate and our limbs grow.

5. If God had put us in the world alone and independent, we should have only had these three means of knowing his mind ; but as He has put us in a Society, He has endowed it to a certain extent with the power to guide us in His name. *Authority* and *counsel* are the two ways in which certain divine sugges-

tions reach us. Obedience and teachableness are the two virtues which receive them. Happy are those who follow the direction they afford! When we consult wisely and humbly, when we obey with God in view, we rarely make mistakes, and the final result is never disadvantageous.

This explanation gives a glimpse of two ways of discovering God's will. One looks for it in the commandments (the signified will) or in events (the manifested will): this is the *objective* method. The other asks for it of the inner motions of grace: this is the *subjective* method. Moreover, they combine and cannot contradict one another, if they are used with prudence.

The second is more delicate to handle; it requires freedom from self, knowledge, and proper training. Recollection is its essential condition: it puts a considerable strain upon our faculties, and gathers up our thoughts from being scattered amidst the things of this world. It is the attentive gaze which can alone gradually pierce the shadows, and a silence ready to hear any voice from heaven. If this is habitual, it creates a kind of special sense, which discovers the whole of the domain of virtue and *dives into the deep things of God.*

We must say quite plainly, that this way of knowing is neither universal nor constant. Many of the highest souls have nothing but

deliberate motives generally to guide them ; and even those who are led by felt grace often find that they are without its light and impulse.

III.—God's Action—How to unite with it

We unite with God's action, not only by letting it take place, but by entering into it with our own free acquiescence : and then, by lending it all the aid of our activity. Nevertheless, this union takes different forms according to the way in which God's will reaches us.—With that which is signified to us by the commandments and counsels, we correspond by *obedience*, which acts or refrains according to the nature of the precept. —To His will manifested by events, we bring either *resignation* which welcomes it with some sadness, or *full acquiescence* which receives it with open arms. If it is a question of His future will, the prospect of which troubles us, we unite ourselves to the unknown by *confidence*.—Lastly, to the secret action, which takes place within us by interior enlightenment or good impulses, we offer *fidelity to grace*, which completes the subjective method already referred to. It is to this last that we shall now devote a special study. It deserves it, for fidelity to grace underlies all acts of obedience and resignation and confidence : such a study is also needed, for

if this subject is badly understood, it would lead people astray.*

The first danger is *illusion*. I mean to act only under the influence of grace. Very well. But may I not mistake for it the latent influence of my own ideas and likings, the habitual influence of my surroundings, or the insidious influence of Satan?—The danger is real, and we might add that it is not peculiar to this method. Must not everyone consult and obey divine grace? What are we now asking for? That the soul shall put herself in the best possible conditions for hearing it. Hence, to escape illusions, she will follow in the same way as everyone else the rules laid down by the masters of the spiritual life for the discernment of spirits.

The second danger is *passivity*. In order to respect the initiative of grace, ought I to renounce all sorts of initiative? Shall I inertly wait for the divine impulse, as the wreck waits for the tide in passive surrender? This would be quietism. "*God's grace, but I laboured.*" says St. Paul. In fact, my initiative goes in quest of God's will; I unite with it by free acquiescence, and my fidelity executes its orders. I act, then, but I act in close dependence; and however great my

* This book nowhere is concerned with mystical states: here, as elsewhere, only ordinary ways are in question.

effort may be, I think of the sovereign power that fills it, and which alone can make it fruitful.

Nor is my freedom at all alienated, for I enquire and co-operate freely; my fidelity may be so great that I shall follow the divine movement without any effort: I shall not follow it any the less because I intend to follow it: and if I come to feel that I cannot withdraw myself from it, it is one of love's impossibilities; but nothing on earth is freer than love.

IV.—Holy Indifference

The best condition for escaping from such dangers is to be found in that dependent disposition, that reasonable and active dependence, which is called *holy indifference.* It attacks illusions in their source, by getting rid of the biassed influence of our own tastes and interests; and passivity, by putting all the resources of our activity at the service of the divine will alone. It is needful to have a right notion of this subject, which is often misunderstood.

Indifference! you will exclaim, but this is to bring down the night upon all that is pleasant here on earth! It is a cruel and cold immolation of all spontaneity and love and joy! Under its sway, life becomes a desert, and the soul a dead thing!

To speak thus is to confuse the *fact* with

the *disposition.* In fact, the most virtuous person comes and goes in life just like anyone else: he feels, chooses, loves, enjoys and suffers; nothing human is cut off from him, and he is found to possess every charm. Where, then, is his indifference hidden? In the principle of all his acts, in the point of departure of all his feelings. Indifference is in a way a theoretical state; or rather, an *antecedent* disposition of just and loving deference: it takes no decision except according to God's will. But if that will is manifested, then indifference loses its *raison d'être*, and gives way to a contrary disposition: adhesion to God's will, and love of all that is proposed to it by the divine will. The position in which Providence has placed us; the affections with which it surrounds us; the talents which it requires us to exercise,—all these open a wide career to our activity. The commandments themselves bind upon us a thousand pleasing duties, which we call thankfulness, care, and affection. Hardly anything is left uncertain except the future; and, even in this future, there are hosts of things as to which we are permitted not to be indifferent, since they are surely part of God's will, as, for instance, our salvation and our perfection.

Then we have to be indifferent—indifferent in principle—only to those things which are indifferent in themselves, like health or sick-

ness, wealth or poverty, a short or long life, and the like. These things, indeed, according to circumstances, may be useful or hurtful to us : but God alone knows ; He may wish to sanctify us either by sickness or work, by trial or consolation. As long as His choice is unknown to me, I have none of my own ; and I will not allow myself to have an eager desire, which would infringe upon the good pleasure of my supreme Lord, and make less supple my adherence to it which He will soon require of me. But even in this waiting time, note it well, holy indifference is not *inaction ;* for there is a *general will* of God which imposes certain obligations upon us all, such as looking after our health and property : this, then, we can do with detachment. *Christian detachment* is the disposition that comes next to indifference in its sanctificatory *rôle :* it is this that communicates to life the free and supple movement which made a poet say :

> " Even while they walk, we feel that birds have wings."

Is there any need to add that indifference is not the same as insensibility. Our feelings, like all our acts, have the whole range of the divine intentions in which to develop : they will be neither less warm nor less sweet, they will remain more pure and more steadfast : indifference of choice is not indifference of heart.

v.—Holy Self-abandonment

Holy self-abandonment, to well-instructed, free, and sensitive souls, is the much-loved conclusion of this teaching : the soul does not abdicate her proper initiative, but her useless anxieties. Calmness concentrates her powers, and confidence increases them. Her fidelity is all the more active because it is freed from all paralyzing fears.

1. Abandonment, as its name shows, is before all a work of *confidence :* the child refers the care of his future to his father, consults him with a look when it is a question of anything to be done, and takes him by the hand when he wants to go forward.

2. Abandonment is a work of *admiration.* Admiration alone reaches truth in its fulness ; alone it perceives all its beauty. It likes to lose itself in the infinities of space, where it contemplates God's action imparting to thousands of vast worlds their bewildering yet ordered motion ; it next tries to find it with deepest wonder in the inner recesses of our being, where the same action, in just as surprising a manner, animates each little drop of blood circulating in countless numbers through our veins, and each of the innumerable and swift sensations that follow one another in our souls : another infinity in its littleness. Before such visions of majesty,

how can we help feeling our dependence? How can we help forming an ardent desire to abandon ourselves to God's action, which is pure and governs the world, when it offers to direct our lives?

3. Union with God's action is alike the dream and the need *of love*. It is her *dream*, for love dreams of intimacy; but what greater intimacy is there than that of two wills united in everything, and, if one may venture to say so, of two lives mingling their action to produce together each one of our thoughts and feelings and acts? What could be deeper? What could be more encouraging? What could be more sweet?

To give, and to give herself, is the *need* of love. O my God, what I have and am is here: take it. Absorb all my activity in Thine, and use it for Thy glory. Tell me what Thou wouldst have, and I would have it too; send me to the end of the world, and I will fly thither; lay work upon me, and I will give myself up to it with happiness; and, as for suffering, I will turn it into love.

Conclusion.—Holy abandonment produces *peace*, by getting rid of all vain anxieties; *liberty*, by setting us free from ourselves; and *simplicity*, by concentrating our attention upon God.

The soul is *uplifted* by the sense of the part she has to play: she knows and feels that she is acting by God's impulse; she knows and

feels that she is, nevertheless, acting as a free creature. She experiences a real *delight* in seeing that she is animated, she, so poor and small, by the action of omnipotence, nay, by the action of an adorable love. Such a thought becomes a *school* for all delicacy of feeling, and a centre of warmth for all kinds of ardour.

To be henceforward nothing but a simple, and virtually continual, act of love would be the highest peace, because it would uplift us as nearly as possible to the state of God Himself. God contemplates all truths in one which is infinite. Such a soul embraces all *possible* good, and assimilates something of it, by admiring it ;—all the good that is *demanded* of it, and she welcomes it as she would welcome God Himself.

To unite one's self to the inner action of God, and to confide one's self to His action in external things which may affect one : these are two objects of the same feeling. To the first, answers fidelity to grace ; to the second, self-abandonment to Providence ; the latter will now engage our attention.

Second Cause of the Want of Peace

Contraction of Soul

Two Principal Causes

Of all enemies of progress, here is the most noxious and insidious and obstinate. It keeps a host of the most beautiful and pure of souls away from God. It deceives them by presenting itself with all the appearances of tenderness of conscience; and, as soon as it has made them admit some apprehension as to their state, it leads them by strict logic to discouragement. But the more upright they are, the more do they then become rooted in a course of reasoning which they regard as true.

I

Contraction of heart is due to an abnormal state of sensibility. This may be permanent or accidental. It is *permanent* when it is due to one's natural disposition, and this is the commonest case. Many, indeed, and those among the best, carry into their piety a timid impressionableness which takes alarm at trifles. Tenderness of conscience and elevation of mind only increase the possibilities of agitation. Reason, when it reacts, doubtless maintains some spirit of continuity, but it is powerless to restore peace, far less expansion of heart.

In others, contraction is only *accidental.* Nothing in their nature predisposes them to it particularly. But various passing causes, all of which affect the sensibility, may produce it. Let us mention, by the way, sickness, overwork, the influence of one's surroundings, and example.

II

Contraction of soul is the effect of a trouble or a fear against which there has been no reaction; it is opposed to confidence in God which dilates the heart. More or less bowed under the load of suffering, one can no longer lift up one's eyes on high.—Contraction is a sort of paralysis, which impedes any upward impulse of the best endowed of souls. How can he pray, conquer self, and raise himself above nature; how can he devote himself to others and unite with God, if his heart is contracted, closed, and perhaps hostile in a dumb kind of way?

According to the words of the Psalmist: "*to run in the ways of God, the heart must be dilated.*" We must draw in copious breaths of God's air; we must feel our blood circulate warmly; we must live with intensity; to dilate means having the strength to expand. Do we not see, moreover, in human circumstances, how decisive is the influence of confidence upon success? To know how to inspire it has always been the quality of great leadership.

III

This defect not only attacks the beginnings of the life of piety, it lies in ambush at every turn ; it sometimes accompanies one throughout the journey. If violent or base temptation is the enemy of ordinary souls, discouragement is the enemy of the more refined.

IV

Contraction is produced either by the troubles of life, or else by those of conscience. Though the effects in both cases are the same, they do not show the same characteristics : hence we will treat each of them separately.

I.—FIRST CAUSE. TROUBLES OF CONSCIENCE

I. *Its nature*.—Commoner still amongst the devout is contraction of heart arising from troubles of conscience. Let us analyze the causes that usually produce it.

First of all, comes the loss of *sensible relish*, the happy facility with which one turns towards the good. A desolating dryness now overhangs all one's devotional exercises.—self-submission, which was formerly welcomed with open heart, now seems intolerable.—and the life of perfection seems altogether contrary to nature. One feels one's self alone, and not only alone, but abandoned. Nothing brings consolation, nothing, either on earth or in heaven.—Such impressions may be more or less keen, more or less general, according to the individual or the season; but in all cases, there is contraction of heart amidst surrounding cold and darkness.

Those who do not understand God's dealings are astonished at such a change. It usually occurs after a time of early fervour. All seemed so beautiful in the first dawning: prayer was an outpouring of love. Now, love no longer helps to uplift and sustain. Cheerful resignation becomes a cold acceptance of the inevitable. No ray of warmth passes through the chilly gloom: we undergo

we do not love. If we are not bowed under the weight of existing troubles, the anticipation of those to come may produce a like contraction. When all seems to us inextricable on earth, we look even to heaven without much hope. Habit and need make us pray all the more, but in the spirit of Moses, when he smote the rock: "Can we bring you forth water out of this rock?"

God's promises seem as if they were made for others. The moving exhortations of our Lord pass over our heads like a vain murmur; the more urgent and gentle and clear they are, the more they leave us in sadness: for a time we have lost the meaning of such language, we are in need in the midst of wealth which is really ours.

When we have passed through much suffering, when our eyes are tired of searching the horizon in vain for help, we are, as it were, in consternation before the menaces of the future, and we conclude: I shall be always unfortunate!

II. *Its analysis.*—Contraction is surely a want of confidence and of self-abandonment; but to pretend to cure it by recommending anyone to be confident and resigned, would be as if a doctor were to say to a sick person: be cured! Let us first try to find the root-cause of the evil. To discover it, we must fathom the primary tendencies of our nature, which are ever living within us in spite of

our virtue. But one of the deepest is certainly the *dread* of suffering.

Under the pressure of sickness, disappointment, poverty and misfortune, you suffer. You will sometimes suffer to the point of torture. Everything within you stiffens itself for an effort against the enemy. You always have a right to react against it, and it is often your duty. But if virtue is satisfied with acting, nature tends to act in a *spirit of rebellion*. But, to whatever extent it be listened to, rebellion is formally opposed to submission as well as to peace. So much for the troubles of the present.—The same impressions result in the same way with regard to any disquieting prospects of the future, and they are so many. Fearful agitation often arises, as we have seen, from the fact that we have suffered much.

In both cases, moreover, the character of contraction is the same: it is *rebellion*. Whether it be acknowledged or overlooked, met with consent or resistance, it is *that* in us. But rebellion, even if it be merely instinctive, is nevertheless a *passion*.

Every passion produces two immediate results: it *absorbs* and it *disturbs*. It absorbs, and in consequence, it makes us forget what we know, what we propose, and what we wish to remember. Here, what it hides is the Providence, and especially the fatherliness, of God.—It does more, it dis-

turbs our *judgement*. Under the excitement it arouses, we exaggerate evils and their consequences; we get alarmed at dangers which are not really serious; we run through the whole list of means, sometimes wise ones, and above all such as are extreme, without deciding upon any of them. This is disturbance and moral disorganization.

In some persons the evil may take a still graver character; it will embitter the heart even towards God Himself. They forget that He is wise and good; or, if they remember it, it is only to heighten by contrast their notion of suffering under such a God. Though faith does not succumb, it is no longer a helpful ally.

We shall soon show how justified are the divine wisdom and goodness, let us now be satisfied to direct the attention of these uneasy spirits to this preliminary observation: the contrast which disturbs you today did not disturb you yesterday; yet, even yesterday you had the spectacle of universal suffering before your eyes; and the whole course of history brought with it the long, long years of groanings of generations gone-by. What then has changed? It is this, that yesterday you had not yourself been a victim of grief: yesterday, your reason was right, because it was free from personal anxieties.

The Treatment of this Evil

SUBMISSIVE RESIGNATION

Christian submission is composed of two elements: the *spirit of faith*, and the *spirit of sonship*. The spirit of faith addresses the intelligence and gives the reason of this resolution; the spirit of sonship addresses the heart and adds thereto inclination. When this high moral education is completed, it manifests itself in great souls by the admirable disposition, which is called, the love of the Cross.

I. *The spirit of faith.*—We must first of all project our hope a long way ahead beyond the borders of this world. God will perhaps deny us such or such an immediate good. Although He is wont to save His children from extreme necessities, sometimes, however, He leaves them in utter need or in the most heart-rending grief, at any rate for a season; but how long and heavy seems the trial!

Why should we demand with urgency health or comfort, or lost reputation or affection? These are but relative goods, the want of which is often more fruitful than their enjoyment. The spirit of faith is a broad view embracing our destiny as a whole. In the vast period which runs into infinity,

what does the span of this life count? Before the splendid prospect of divine pleasures, the passing vision of our greatest griefs disappears from view like the brightness of a lamp in the brilliancy of sunlight! Let us live amidst these certainties; let us inhale this bracing air; let us make a holy pause to survey deliberately these overflowing compensations: and, by such lofty, strengthening, and dominating views we shall complete the education of our faith.

II. *The spirit of sonship.*—The motive of infinite compensations is certainly very powerful, but it remains rather cold: it does not touch that part of us which requires for its liberation the sense of one who guards and loves us.

This is not the place to give a full explanation of this consideration: it would be an endless task. We should have to go to heaven to discover, from before the creation of the world, the secret of God's love for us, and to follow out across the ages its long perseverance and innumerable forgivenesses, and all the manifestations of its loving-kindness. We should have to see this misunderstood love incarnate in Jesus, appearing under familiar features endued with all the resources of human nature. After that, we should have to watch on our knees the Man-God: kneeling at His crib, where He has made Himself so small that we can hold

Him in our arms ; kneeling before the silent Workman of Nazareth, bent under our life of toil ; kneeling, as we listen to the spell of His words. Everything in Him is a call to our confidence : " Why are ye afraid, and why take ye so much thought for the morrow ? Your Father in heaven knoweth that ye have need of these things !—Knock, and it shall be opened unto you : seek and ye shall find." " Ask in My name : all that ye shall ask in My name, My Father shall give unto you." And, like a teacher with very little children, He puts on our lips prayers which cannot be denied, because they have passed His own lips : " Our Father who art in heaven—forgive us our sins—give us our daily bread—deliver us from evil."

O God the Father, who hast sacrificed Thy Son, Thine only Son, for us, it is because Thou lovest us beyond what we know, and beyond what we shall ever know in full. The troubles which Thou hast permitted to fall upon me, and those which Thou holdest in reserve for me in the future, are all of Thy choosing, all for my real good. Thou who art the eternal seer, *Thou knowest ! As for me*, I can only see the present ; *I do not know*, for I can only see the present and its troubles. Oh, receive my self-surrender and my trust ; I give myself up to Thee altogether : do with my goods, my heart, and

my life what Thy love suggests to Thee, for to Thy love I abandon myself!

III. *The love of the Cross.*—A still more simple means (it is more simple, because it is higher), of keeping one's peace amidst troubles, is to love them.—In this way, we enter right into the enemy's stronghold, the dread of suffering, and we hoist upon its ruins the flag of *the love of the Cross.* "O! how many crosses I had," said the venerable Curé d'Ars. "I could not carry them; I began to ask for the love of them; and, since then, I have been happy." Nature is quite unable to understand this strange theory, but all the truths of Christianity proclaim it; and saints, like the Curé d'Ars, have found in it not only peace, but true greatness. "Ah, how blessed are those who love and who bear thee, O Cross of my Saviour," says St. Francis of Sales. Oh, let us well love the crosses we find on our road! O holy affliction, how amiable art thou, since thou comest from the Father of eternal mercy, who purposed thee from all eternity, and intended thee for poor me! O Cross, my heart wishes for thee, since God willed thee! O Cross, my soul finds thee dear, and embraces thee with all its love!

"To suffer is almost the only good we can do in this world. Blessed are the crucified!—If envy could reign in the kingdom of eternal love, angels would envy men

two excellent things, which consist in two sufferings: the suffering of God for man, and the suffering of man for God!"

Poor soul, so taken up with troubles, wouldst thou consent to be a rebel, embittered and led astray by passion? No, a thousand times!—But thou art doubtless persuaded that these troubles and this bitterness are no rebellion? Then, ask thyself the following question: what would my moral state be, if I were to love these troubles, and if I were to thank God for them? Or rather, say to God: "I thank Thee for these troubles, and I wish to love them for Thy sake!" Thou wilt then feel a serene brightness at once shine upon thy grief. Therefore, go on with thy declaration once made; reiterate it; keep it, and it will bring thee peace, because it will have overcome thy rebellion.

IV. *False expansion of heart.*—There is confidence which is not real confidence, because it is not founded upon God. This is the sign of it: is there a feeling of sudden release from your contraction of heart? Then, look closely, some human means has made its appearance.

Human means, always human means! These alone have the power of giving us back peace. When the sun disappears, all is gloomy; when it sets at night, all is plunged in darkness. Thus is it with our confidence.

The sun, it is true, emerges from the clouds, and every morning it rises from the darkness. These facts are the result of such constant laws that we have no merit in expecting their recurrence; but to reckon on a cause possessed of free determination, which remains unknown to us, in other words, to reckon on God's action working for our greater good: this is more than a matter of reason, it depends upon faith; *this is supernatural.* Confidence based upon God, really upon Him, and not on human means, is an intense act of the spiritual life.

It answers to our state of *trial* here below, it aids us as a *support* amidst the universal uncertainty that surrounds us; and it sets up *family life* between God and us. Without it, the *law of Redemption* remains a sealed book. "Ought not Christ to have suffered?" Without it, *divine love* is narrow, mingled, and powerless. There will be no more lofty views and great impulses and generous undertakings.—Want of confidence *misunderstands God* and *our own soul:* God, in His goodness and in the part He has to play; our own soul, in her duties and needs.

II.—CONTRACTION OF HEART RESULTING FROM THE TROUBLES OF LIFE

This is in Reality a Revolt against Suffering

I. *Its nature.*—1. "Happiness," says Bossuet, "is a compound of so many parts that some one of them is always wanting."—What gives us joy brings us pain as soon as it leaves us; and it is in our affections that we suffer the most. Our defects and the defects of others add to these inevitable sorrows guilty sorrows.

We instinctively regard suffering as an enemy, and we believe less in the goodness of God who sends it. Being saddened and upset, our heart feels somewhat overwhelmed and refuses to make an effort. Words of consolation weary or annoy us: we receive them with an uneasy smile which seems full of protest: what have I done to God that He crushes me like this? I have served Him, and He forsakes me; I have prayed to Him, and He remains deaf. Oh, how pitiful are these unhappy faces tormented with suffering, and these tearful eyes which no longer discern the heavens above them!

We do not altogether rebel, for we would not sin; we resign ourselves, but, in our resignation, all is so dark that we cannot discern the love of God. Yet, only yester-

day, His goodness was about us like a sweet odour, and His presence, like a light. In that ideal atmosphere, life was full of exultation.—What, then, has happened? Was I the victim of an illusion, or have I been unfaithful? I have neither liking nor strength nor desire: I am no longer the same!

Will you, then, go back? Will you forsake this or that resolution, or refuse to make this sacrifice or that restriction upon yourself?—No, indeed, not that! To-day I am going the same road as I went yesterday; I am doing my present duty; "I am going on as usual," just as Jesus went on to His agony; but nothing will convince me that I am not offending God!—And thereupon, the poor soul goes on her way, finding on all sides new proofs of her sad conviction.

And yet, if it were a trial? What, if it were a trial of your love and constancy and disinterestedness?—Oh, what a relief that would be! Henceforward, I should suffer without being grieved, and I think I should love all my troubles.—O tried soul, be at peace!

2. Usually beginners, and often other souls, as well, retain unhappy propensities and imperfect habits, in a word, all the shabby baggage of human wretchedness. All that is disavowed and fought against, but nevertheless, it exists. We should simply use it to keep ourselves humble; we have rarely such wisdom as this.

The sight of these infirmities keeps us in a kind of *discontent* that borders upon agitation. Why is this? Because we make ourselves responsible for what we merely undergo; because we do not yet understand that God wishes to use these miseries of ours to form our virtue.

3. *Discouragement* is the great object of the devil; one would think that he reckons only on this means to stay our spiritual progress.—It is too late to try the attractions of evil; it is too soon to make us give up devotional exercises and confession and communion; we have not so far any doubts as to God's love.—If we are attacked by temptations of cowardice, we shall do like the traveller in the fable who clutched his cloak more tightly—so then, he must deceive us. If only he could make us think that we are in a bad state, and that God has forsaken us! Then, our courage would ebb, and defeat would be close at hand.

He usually begins with preliminary trials; he fills the soul with a distaste for holy things; and he makes her experience a depressing sense of the divine displeasure. If he succeeds in making one curtail or omit some devotional exercise, or shrink from consenting to some sacrifice, he at once exploits the weakness and exhibits it as a manifest proof of a state of lukewarmness; but now he displays the very failure, which he was sug-

gesting a little while ago, as of no consequence, as if it were a grave infidelity as soon as it has been committed.

After he has kept us a long time in a state of uneasiness, he tries more subtle temptations; not that he hopes to obtain our real consent, but because he can almost make sure of sowing trouble, and this is his object; he has no other. He then persuades us, in the misery of our temptation, that we are guilty because he has made some impression upon us; and that, because we seem to admit, or to be obsessed by, low thoughts. Those who are inexperienced do not perceive that they are now not concerned with some direct temptation connected with some bad object, but that they only have to do with a *temptation* to discouragement *in disguise*. They must have had a number of such experiences before they will be convinced of this, for the declarations of their director hardly ever suffice.

4. And what happens if sins, real sins, come to give substance and a kind of proof to such fears? All their old anxieties then return to overwhelm them: even former feelings and temptations seem like sins: all along, they think, they have been subject to illusions! They feel their hearts tighten, and exclaim: God shrinks from me!

Be bold enough to cut short all these reasonings; and first, look at their starting-

point. Because you have committed a few sins to-day, does it follow that your feelings and temptations of yesterday were also sins? Do you not distinguish a decisive difference between them? To-day's sins were voluntary; you saw and felt this, and have no doubt about it. Why, then, was it not equally clear to you in the case of your so-called sins of yesterday?

If you deluge the past in darkness, if you take pleasure in increasing your discomfiture, beware lest the cause of all this be not in reality a *feeling of vexation:* you are annoyed and humiliated at having committed these sins!—True contrition would think first of all of the grief inflicted upon God, and would take up an altogether different position. Its one desire would be to make good the wrong done; it would only think of doing better, and in the first place, of getting into a state to do better, that is to say, of regaining courage.

II. *Its analysis.*—As we have just seen, dryness in devotion, accompanied with vexations and sometimes with distaste—the evil outcome of our infirm nature and the devil's temptations—and lastly, the more or less voluntary sins resulting from human frailty, these are, in many cases, a cause of contraction of heart which keeps one low and helpless and troubled.

On looking closer, we shall find that this

sort of contraction is not of the same kind as that which we considered previously. It is also a rebellion, but a rebellion against *humiliation* rather than suffering; and it is mainly experienced by finer spirits. This observation leads us to enquire whether its cause is not some feeling of higher character, indeed, but ill-regulated.

This feeling seems to be, taking the sensibility as its common basis, *ideality*, an exacting disposition, which cannot tolerate without repulsion anything which contradicts the idea of the beautiful and the best, whether in circumstances or in itself, or even, one may venture to say, in God's action. Such an one will not be reconciled to human wretchedness, whether it be that which lurks in his own conscience, or that which he sees displayed before his eyes. He cannot understand how God can endure it and permit it to occur. When he is unable to pray and dead to the holy truths he admires, and with no relish for what he desires to love, he is ashamed and feels humiliated and disconcerted. What a host of thoughts and fancies and vexatious impressions awaken in spite of his resolutions, and go on in spite of his disavowals; and then he feels himself lowered, and his trouble increases. It is in vain that he knows the difference between the two parts of the soul, one of which remains passive and inferior, while the other is

superior and alone responsible; his injured individuality continues to feel dishonoured and to have a sense of falling away. This persuasion disturbs him and makes him think there must be some hidden fault, some deserved casting off; and sometimes, it deeply shakes his confidence, and love of God who has made things thus, or, at any rate, of the Father who does not spare His child the consequences of an original sin which he has not committed.

The Treatment of this Evil

HUMBLE RESIGNATION

1. Let such an one dig more deeply into this dark problem, and his very ideality will rejoice when, behind these scattered clouds, appears the marvellous horizon opened up by the plan which God has been able to contrive, not out of an unresisting nothingness, but out of the measureless human wretchedness which unceasingly opposes the good and beautiful with its inertia and low tastes and mean pursuits. He will see how Jesus, by a happy necessity, needs to take our place in order to restore us to health and to uplift us; and he will exclaim with St. Paul: "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Then, taking a more general view, he will perceive the distant results of the existing order of things, which has made martyrs out of the materials of injustice and barbarism; which, in spite of passions to fight, has raised up virgins and the great ascetics of the desert; which, in spite of sins to expiate, has given us a soul-stirring band of such saints as the Magdalene and St. Augustine; and above all these strangely combined glories, he will see God reigning as it were on His throne and exclaiming with pride

and justice : " See what I have made out of the handful of dirt which is called human wretchedness !"

2. The summing up of these considerations takes the form of this practical resolution : I *reprobate* all that is bad within me ; I accept all that is humiliating—I reject what is bad, because it displeases God, and is unjust and base—I accept what is humiliating, because to accept it is an act of virtue ; a virtue of justice and humility, of patience and love too, for, without divine love, I should have no strength to love these things. —How beautiful is such a resolution as this !

Such a declaration, made with deliberation and sincerity, will drive away the misunderstanding ; and heaven will be clear of clouds, and will shed upon us the brightness of confidence. In this light you will find the sweet faces which were veiled from you : goodness, mercy, and love ; and, like a traveller whose courage has been renewed, you will resume the still sad road of one who is in exile ; you will still feel the weight of human miseries ; your foot will no doubt stumble over more than one obstruction ; you will perhaps fall ; but you will go forward untroubled and with courage, knowing that you are God's child all the same. This word will be your refuge in all alarms : I belong to God *all the same !* He loves me *all the same !* Then, let us always go forward *all the same !*

What, indeed, could God gain from your discouragement? And what could you gain? Poor weary soul, rest at length on thy well-beloved Father's breast.—Make a humble and gentle endeavour to become more worthy of Him.—As a result of your state, make a cheerful resolution to love better those whose defects perhaps would close your heart against them. Does not God act thus with you?

3. The endurance of the troubles of conscience is perfected by the *love of our own abjection*, just as the endurance of the troubles of life finds its perfection in the love of the Cross. This supernatural love takes the place of the love of the beautiful, which plays us false when it shows us the virtue of fallen man in an ideal far above our miseries; for it will tolerate no falling away, and is even scandalized when it meets with temptation. The ideal of nature in its origin is no longer ours; and he who looks for it soon loses his peace, because he leaves the order of things as it is. Happy is he who loves his lot of being cast off, and who can keenly appreciate this word of St. Francis of Sales: "The throne of mercy is our wretchedness." (See p. 50 and several other instances of the application of this great principle.)

Remarks as to all the Different Kinds of Contraction of Heart

I. *How dangerous it is.*—Contraction of heart, whatever be its cause, produces a *diminution of life*, and exposes one to an actual *giving up* of piety.

In itself, it is always a *forgetfulness* of the fatherly character of God, and a look too much *fastened upon ourselves.*

II. *The habit of contraction of heart.*—Contraction of heart is like all other moral states: from acts it passes into a habit. It is not our sufferings, but our imperfect dispositions under suffering, which set it up. From suffering badly we become incapable of suffering well; every trouble soon awakens our sickly sensibility, like a slight blow inflames an open wound.

If such is your state, O devout reader, first understand that God pities you, yes, pities you, like a father; understand, too, that your dejection and trouble are not in any way sins; that you retain all your rights to be loved, and all your certainty of getting help.—But, on the other hand, lay in a large store of patience with yourself and with heaven. Habits are not changed like dispositions of the will. They have the peculiarity of living on, even after they have been

disavowed and temporarily overcome. Expect to see them reappear, to feel them urging you to the same rebellion and distrust and discouragement.—Here are new victories to be won.—Thus will the requirement of the moral law be fulfilled. But the day will dawn when you will have conquered so often that the habit of victory will have taken the place of that of defeat.

III. *Contraction of heart is often a trial.*—Even when it is the result of secondary causes, contraction of heart is almost always a *trial* willed by God.—Was our love pure enough and our virtue steadfast enough? We shall soon find out.—Trial shows what is wanting and how to provide for it.—By taking away all consolation, it teaches one to serve God for His own sake.—In demanding ceaselessly renewed efforts, it develops virtue.

Oh, if it were only a trial, you exclaim, how glad should I be! If I were only sure that I do not displease God, and that He is taking the trouble to train me; that He is offering me occasions of suffering for Him and at His hand: this is just what I want above all things!—If these be your dispositions, be at peace, and let your peace pass into joy: for you belong to God, and that more than you ever did!

"I will increase thy sensibility," said Our Lord one day to Blessed Margaret Mary,

and her keen sensitiveness to certain trials is well known. By these inner pains, the divine Master wishes to create for Himself a race of souls from whom He may ask everything, so that He may be able to give Himself entirely to them in exchange.

What a noble thing it is to feel always weary, and never to stop !—to go on bravely with difficult duties without liking them !—to continue praying when the heart seems dead !—to alleviate the wounds of others when one's own heart is sore !—You see one going by in wonderful serenity, sowing the seed of kindly speech and acts of self-sacrifice on the way, and giving an example of all kinds of virtue with the sweetest of smiles ; and yet perhaps the very same individual hides in his heart an agony such as the Saviour bore in the Garden of Olives. Like Him, he *goes on his way as usual,* at the same pace and with the same will, making no difference between joy and sorrow.

It is written in the Psalms : *" Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves."*

The Third Cause of the Want of Peace

SCRUPULOSITY

I. *Scrupulosity is always a mistake.*—Scrupulosity belongs both to the causes of paralysis and to those of deviation.

It paralyzes, when it is a *contraction* of heart; it produces deviation, so far as it is an *error* of the intellect.

It must neither be confounded with tenderness of conscience nor with contraction of heart. Extreme tenderness of conscience and painful contraction of soul no doubt border upon it and may arouse it: but they are distinguished from it by this essential characteristic, that scrupulosity is always an *error*.

This error has to do sometimes with a matter of *principle*, sometimes with a matter of *fact*. With regard to principles, what is merely a matter of counsel is transformed into a matter of duty, or a light obligation into a grave one.—With regard to fact, a temptation is taken for a sin, a mere impression for consent. Here, however, are a few of the most common errors:

1. Here is a person, who may be very intelligent, but who will never be able to see his way clearly within or venture to make any positive statement as to what concerns

himself. Have I really the will to belong to God, or is it not an illusion ?—If some very difficult occasion arose, should I not give way ?—Am I now ready to confront it ? Do not my sins predispose me to all sorts of falling away, and do they not now make me responsible for the temptations which are one of their consequences ?—Did I not consent, at least for a time, to such and such a desire or thought ?—Amongst them all, have I not at least given in once ? Then, am I any longer in a state of grace ?

2. The difference between mortal sins and venial sins, in such people, generally remains in a state of confusion, and timidity makes them incline towards pessimistic views : certainly, this must have been a mortal sin : in any case, I thought it was, and I did it all the same ; therefore, I am gravely guilty. Applying these notions to the future and multiplying possibilities to any extent, they imagine themselves taken in an inextricable network of sins and terrors, in which they become more and more embarrassed in proportion as they struggle to disentangle themselves from it.

3. Sometimes their uncertainty embraces all kinds of decisions : if I speak of this or that, if I do this or that, shall I not be wanting in charity ? Shall I not give an occasion of sin to others ? Ought I not, on the contrary, to do this or to say that ?—Then,

there is anxiety as to the most essential duties : do I not love my children too much ? or some one else ? No doubt, it is my duty and my support ; but I am seeking self in it, and that perhaps in a very blameworthy manner ?

4. Their sickly sensibility is easily attacked by any misfortunes that happen to them : it must be a punishment ; God is cursing me ! —Do they happen to lack relish in praying, and to have no heart for their duties ? It is an evident proof that grace is forsaking them.—And all this is not a mere impression, but a real conviction ; a conviction which is surely false, but which is disturbing.

5. Confession, which ought to be their medicine, becomes their torment—old sins keep returning to the mind, and create only a greater state of confusion through their numerous past accusations of them. By dint of repeating them, they become, as it were, incrusted in the conscience.—They are anxious as to former confessions ; there are fastidious and painful details, sometimes quite unfitting, which they think themselves obliged to give.—While in the confessional, they are so intensely worried and absorbed that they do not hear the reassuring words of the priest, and these pass unheard. They make sharp interruptions, even during the absolution, to interject some new fear or everlasting repetition.—They are perpetually

convinced that the confessor did not understand rightly, and so on.

If the confession of sins, which, after all, is a question of facts, produces so many fears, how will it be with their contrition, the sincerity and motives of which are much more difficult to apprehend? I do not feel any contrition, and so I cannot have any. I fell again into the same sins, and therefore, I could not have had any. I am becoming no better, and so I must be habitually abusing absolution.

6. Holy Communion, too, is the subject of numerous scruples, the result of which is to keep the penitent away from it, or to dissipate its beneficent influence.

II. *Disorders resulting from these errors.*— If scrupulosity were only a form of *suffering*, it would at least be a merit; but it is a *disorder*; it disturbs, misleads, and absorbs.

1. Its first effect is to *turn the soul away from her end*, which is the love of God, to set her on a fidgety quest for an ever disappearing light and peace. In this anxiety, there is often at bottom a great love of God; but this love does not expand, and it is scarcely exercised, and thus tends to diminish.

2. From this first evil springs a second. These fears and enquiries and perpetual returns to self, these endless talks in which nothing but self is spoken of, develop the

eternal enemy, *selfishness*, which, although it is spiritual and unconscious, nevertheless presents the characteristics of this frightful defect, and produces all its effects: blindness to the needs of others, insensibility as to their troubles, and the obliteration of God. Like anyone who is drowning, such a distracted one would cling to everything and sacrifice everything to what he believes to be a means of salvation.

3. The scrupulous person, instead of *loving the good*, only knows how to fear the evil; but fear in itself brings forth no fruit. Not being an active principle of spiritual life, it can only be a stimulatory element; but it becomes a disturbing element as soon as it begins to be dominant.

When these returns of the past have to do with certain sins or with certain subtle temptations, they awaken impressions which surround such a poor soul with an atmosphere of foul fog.

4. That which does not go towards God *does not rise*, and that which runs to excess *does not last*. A time comes when weariness gains the upper hand, and then scrupulosity may be succeeded by a real relapse: the burden we have put upon our backs becomes so heavy that we end by casting it aside altogether.

Meanwhile, the scrupulous person wastes a deal of precious time, which is valuable to

his confessor and to the charitable people whom he importunes with his repetitions; and, what is still more disastrous, he brings piety into discredit, since his relations and those around him make it responsible for his distortions and excesses.

The Treatment of this Evil

OBEDIENCE

Scrupulosity is pre-eminently a form of *suffering* and *humiliation;* it is also a *trial.* Yes, it is a trial, even when it is deeply rooted in one's nature, and even if it were never to disappear. Did not God know everything, when He made us? Did He not from the outset wonderfully arrange both our difficulties and the means of overcoming them? If, in His plan, He has so ordered things that He has assigned a place for the effect of the sins of others upon us, how can He have left scrupulosity to chance, because it is a part of our nature? And if He allows it to lie heavy on our whole life, what will it matter?—if He only makes use of it to bring us to heaven, perhaps with more certainty and with greater glory?

I. *The error which gives rise to scrupulosity comes from a sickly state of conscience.*—As we have said, scrupulosity differs from contraction of heart in that it is an *error.*

The scrupulous are, indeed, wanting in judgement, at least as to certain subjects. As to other matters, they will be very clear-sighted, and good counsellors for other souls. But confront them with this or that question about their interior life, and there they

are, completely at sea. They are like the colour-blind. In both classes, their state is an abnormal one.

II. *This sickly state of conscience takes away a person's right to be his own director.*—This new element, *error*, requires a new rule. A scrupulous person ought to recognize, first of all, that his state is, in reality, one of *sickness*, and that his way of feeling and judging is by no means normal. But, in such a state, since a man's judgement is no longer sound, he forfeits his right to direct his conscience.

III. *The right of directing a scrupulous conscience devolves upon the priest.*—All the masters of the spiritual life agree on this point: the scrupulous need obedience, not only the obedience of material docility which does what is commanded; but obedience of the judgement, which means reforming one's ideas as well. But, note well, if this is a duty, it becomes a *right*, the right to obey, despite all fears.

The scrupulous, who have usually subtle minds, find, alas! a host of ways of avoiding this necessary rule. "I would willingly abandon my own judgement," such an one will say, "in any doubtful case, but here all is so clear, that I could not think otherwise, no matter how I might try."—But if you thought otherwise, you would think as you ought to do, and you would not be scrupu-

lous. But scrupulous you are! You are told so; believe it: you have the right to do so, and God will never blame you for any sin which,—though the assumption is an impossible one,—you would commit by obeying.

I would obey, if my confessor knew me thoroughly well; but every word he utters proves to me that he thinks me quite other than I really am: I recognize this with as much calmness as sorrow. And if he is mistaken, I do not charge him with any fault, for I am to blame: I have never been able to make myself known to him. Besides, it is my punishment for the past; God deprives me of all enlightenment, and gives none to my confessor.

Such is the eternal refrain of these poor souls, and such their eternal difficulty. Their sincerity and their uprightness do but aggravate their misfortune.—"There is nothing that I should like better than to refer myself to his judgement. What peace and enjoyment it would mean!"—Once more, consider that you are ill and that your judgements are also diseased.—Consider that, by his learning and experience, the priest is in a position to know a soul's state far better than she can herself, and often without her having to give any explanations. Does one not thus rely daily on one's doctor? Is there any temerity in his taking upon himself such responsibility?

IV. *This obedience is of a supernatural character.*—We may obey our director for very different motives : 1. because his good qualities inspire confidence in us ; 2. because his reasons and explanations carry conviction with them ; 3. lastly, because, after choosing him with prudence, we look upon him as *God's delegate.*

These three motives are often found united, and each of them is a good one, but it would be dangerous to be satisfied with the two first, because they leave the devil a very open ground of attack. It is, indeed, very easy for him to depreciate the good qualities on which one was hitherto relying. Circumstances also will arise, which will tell in favour of uncertainty. A director, however excellent, may have defects, and one or other of his explanations may seem to be less decisive. These motives for obedience, being natural, suffer from the conditions of our always fallible nature. It is not thus with the third motive, which is fully supernatural. When one obeys on this word of *God ;* " He who heareth you, heareth Me," one makes an act of faith : the Holy Ghost is *put in a position* to intervene ; divine responsibility is *involved ;* a wisely supernatural obedience cannot go astray.

Conclusion.—This rule is rigorously binding on the scrupulous. The right of self-government, which they are not in a posi-

tion to use, is deputed by *God* to their confessor. By a happy exchange, the right they lose is replaced by the *right to obey*, despite all counter-impressions and beliefs. Furthermore, it is their *duty* to prefer their priest's judgement to their own, despite any evidence to the contrary, which can be only illusory.

In the confessional, the priest is the master of consciences, as of forgiveness : he is the depositary of God's authority : he represents Jesus Himself. Shut your eyes, stretch out your hand, and allow yourself to be led ; before long, you will find your God once more in recovered peace and with renewed fervour.

CHAPTER II

CAUSES THAT LEAD SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY ASTRAY

False Notions, Errors as to Principles
Illusions, Errors as to Ourselves

I

FALSE NOTIONS, ERRORS AS TO PRINCIPLES

I. Errors as to the Nature of Piety

Any mistake as to this matter may lead one astray as to the end to be pursued. In fact, if piety is identified with any particular way of living, or practice or special virtue, it is that direction which one's efforts take; but then piety becomes limited; it overlooks or disdains what does not fall within its restricted view; it becomes *narrow*, and often even more or less false.

St. Francis of Sales has treated this subject in a masterly way at the beginning of his *Introduction to a Devout Life*. We shall be satisfied with summing up his teaching in methodical form.

1. The spiritual life is made up of the love of charity—devotion is the *activity* of such love.—Devotional exercises are the *means* of its maintenance; virtues are its *effects*.

2. Activity is *shown* by the facility, frequency, and promptness of our acts. These

qualities are the *distinctive characteristic* of fervour, which is identified with piety.

3. But it can only be exercised on these two conditions : the soul must be *healthy*, so as to have all her strength,—and she must be *free*, so that nothing may stop her movement.

The soul is healthy, when she is *purified*, and she is *free*, when she is *pacified*.

4. From these ideas are deduced the two fundamental laws that govern piety : the *stirring up of love*, and the *getting rid of hindrances ;* which the Schoolmen translated by these two mysterious expressions : *conversio ad Deum, aversio a creaturis*, " conversion to God, turning away from creatures," a twofold beating of one pair of wings that bear the soul towards perfection. It is useless to lose one's self on the heights and to soar in liberty ; we can only keep up by fresh beatings of our wings. These beatings will be more and more wide apart, and lighter and lighter ; they will become so easy that we shall scarcely feel them, and so ready that we shall not be able to distinguish them ; but they will continue to be necessary : for while we are on earth, nature always retains some of its heaviness, and love ever requires new impulses.—Of these two elements, love is of the *essence* of piety, and purification is its *condition*.

What breadth of view, and in this breadth,

what freedom and justice!—No one is excluded from perfection: every life may be permeated with love!—Piety is not like a *mould* which compresses: it is a *vital principle* which shapes us.

II. Errors as to the Use of Means of Fervour

This is a question of exercises of piety, privations, devotions, and other holy practices.

These means do not of themselves constitute fervour; they are its sustenance. They may be more or less happily supplanted by other resources of a different kind, it is true; but nevertheless, a judicious use of them is still the safe rule.—No doubt habitual union with God pre-eminently includes them; but such union, without their help, is hardly to be looked for amidst so many contrary influences.

The question we have to investigate is the following: are we not to-day prone to sacrifice the means of fervour too easily, and do we give them their true place?

Once a contrary tendency prevailed, and St. Francis of Sales fought against it successfully. He did not do this by throwing himself on the opposite side, as is done by ill-balanced minds; but he drew the wisest of rules from the truest of principles. He cannot be blamed for introducing the slightest cause of relaxation. His rule of life is really austere, and his demands are very exacting; but his manner is encourag-

ing, and as we listen to him, we are reminded of the oil poured forth, the odour of which follows in the Bridegroom's train.

What do we note to-day among the devout? Less time devoted to meditation and prayers:—fewer practices of mortification;—a smaller place given to Christian life in the family.

This curtailment is explained, if it is not justified, by our social conditions: life is more exciting and more absorbing; health is less robust, and our habits are more refined; indifference and antagonism make their encroachments upon us. But do we not yield too much to these influences, and is our fervour taken enough care of? Under the pressure of unfavourable circumstances, do we keep a healthy appreciation of what is necessary, and set just limits to our concessions?—We see, indeed, what is given up; but we do not see very clearly what has taken its place.

1. You have not much time; but can you seriously maintain that a few quarters of an hour, devoted to your soul, would injure the duties of your state of life? How many long and useless conversations there are! How many unprofitable occupations that could easily be dispensed with! Here is one in comfortable circumstances who is ready to sacrifice all his spare time to save trifling expenses: apparently the care of the soul

must cost nothing at all and come after everything else.

2. Is some particular mortification really a danger to your health? Have you tried with any real earnestness to begin with, and with any perseverance afterwards? If you make a reluctant start, and with the conviction that you will soon get tired, you are almost sure to be so; for your morale will strangely influence your physical condition. —At any rate, do you try to make up by some mortifications in detail which cannot possibly affect your health?

3. That it is right to be lenient is incontestable; true charity is kind even towards moral infirmities. But prudence teaches us that kindness is not weakness; and experience proves that by constant yielding we become slaves, without doing others any good.—To subordinate requirements is wise, but to sacrifice them is not so.

Since we have to do with society in a sickly condition, great allowances must be made. We must often keep close in our hearts our love of God, and hide our piety in the secrecy of our chambers. But do we not carry this reserve too far? It seems as if our only care was to dissimulate our faith, while that of maintaining it troubles us too little.

To renounce our own likings and tastes in the things of this world, to do our best

to meet the wishes of others, not to contradict or complain, and to forget ourselves, indeed ; this is what is virtuous and creditable. But to renounce the means that sustain virtue, is not this to expose it to danger, and have we not a right to be wisely insistent in this matter, even if we are ready to make sacrifices in other directions ?

Nor is it only our own good that would be the gainer. From our calm persistence, from the discovery or surmises of our use of religious exercises, emanates a spiritual influence which has a secret action on our surroundings, even if they be antagonistic. We fear that we shall keep people away from religion, if we show that we practise it ; but nothing prevents its acceptance like indifference ; and, as a matter of fact, we tolerate indifference. Often in one who protests and gets angry about such things, some anxiety as to the things of faith begins to take shape. Experience proves that hostility is better than forgetfulness.—Sacrifice what you can omit to do without any sort of compromise, but calmly bind yourself to what nourishes the soul's life and gives you weight.

III. Errors as to What the Love of God requires us to Forsake in Natural Affections.

Certainly, our propensity towards human affections is so strong that it is always to be kept under watch and often under control. Hence, there is no question of claiming for it an unreserved liberty : but here, as in all other things, it is important that all should be assigned its proper place. "By wishing to be higher than angels we end in becoming less than men," said Pascal ; and, if nature does not break out in excesses against the restrictions put upon it, it becomes to some extent *cramped* and disfigured. Lifeless, it lends itself ill to doing good ; withered up, it can yield no fruit ; distorted, it gives an unhappy notion of piety.

I. Let us begin by considering an important expression which is used in some devotional books.

To love God alone : these words are sometimes used unfittingly—hence certain subtle and logical souls get upset—but the phrase is a commonplace for most others.

To love God alone means to love Him for His own sake—to love anything *at all connected with Him* or like Him,—whatever *leads on to Him.* But does this sort of love

exclude all other kinds, at any rate from the point of view of perfection : in other words, can one love for God's sake, and also for the sake of attractive qualities or binding ties ?

We can, and, in practice, we ought. We can, because the motives of these two sorts of love are not *contrary* to one another : we ought, because each of them represents a *different order of duties :* and this we are about to demonstrate.

II. Let us first determine the *rôle* of divine love in human affections. This love must be supreme, *i.e., it must surpass* all our other affections (surpass them in appreciation and will, not always sensibly) ; it must *direct* them, and, if need be, *make up any deficiency* in them. Thus it will sacrifice anything which is opposed to it, bring back what is astray, and enable us to fulfil our duties when human motives do not induce us to do so. In this way, this love imparts to our feelings its own elevation and solidity without depriving them of their spontaneity and charm.

Human affections, indeed, answer to an order of things established by God, and they assure its maintenance in a pleasant manner. Could the heavy responsibilities of family life be borne without love ? Would the child or husband or father be satisfied with care for their material welfare ? Is friendship made up of self-sacrifice only ?—No, *all*

beings who can feel wish to feel that they are loved. For life and growth, heat is indispensable : in this, the soul of man resembles the plant.

Moreover, when He instituted this order of things, and for the purpose of maintaining it, God implanted in the human heart as many kinds of affection as He made *objects* to be loved. Would He strip our nature of these when He enriches it with His own love ? Would He be constrained to do this by the necessity of calling a higher feeling to life within us ? Not at all : for each of these kinds of love has its own proper object, and cannot therefore be bestowed indiscriminately. " If anyone were to love his father with the love of a brother, he certainly would not love him enough ; if anyone were to love his wife only as he loves his father, he would certainly not love her fittingly ; and anyone who loved his footman like a son would be guilty of a piece of impertinence. Thus men's loves differ according to the differences in the kinds of goodness for which they love " (St. Francis of Sales).

We must further remark that legitimate affections, when they are properly regulated, tend to produce a *moral equilibrium* by occupying in us everything that requires to act. —Oh, the admirable wisdom of God ! Not only does it allow our affections, but it also

encourages them by attaching some enjoyment to the fulfilment of each duty!

III. To push the question to its utmost limits, we must enquire whether there is anything more perfect than the purest *employment* of human affections.—Certainly, there is nothing which God may not ask for from some souls by way of *sacrifice:* but in such cases, it is a question of special *vocations* or of personal *calls.* Here, it is enough to know that *true perfection* may be practised in all conditions of life, several of which demand for their exercise in accordance with God's will natural affection both tender and devoted.

These explanations may spare some persons anxiety and narrowness, and enable their piety to retain its wisely human character.

NOTE.—These principles concerning natural affections apply, for the same reasons, to the use of this world's goods. The only thing forbidden in such matters is making enjoyment the end, especially if it be separated from duty, of which it is solely the stimulus.

IV.—Errors as to What to Expect from the Supernatural Element

This question is so deep and so complex that we should not have attempted to deal with it, had it not been of capital importance. One may say that it is the *knot* of most questions in the spiritual life: it resolves theoretical difficulties which might cause trouble; and it fixes the wise determination of practical rules.—Whenever God pleases to manifest His supernatural order in heaven in all its truth, we shall feel the pleasure of a traveller who, from some mountain-top, beholds the harmonious interweaving of roads and rivers and towns. Let us try to gather up a few rays of light that have fallen amidst the shadows.

First of all, let us look at and appreciate the shadows; then we shall better understand the brightness which drives them away.

I.—The Problem

1. How is it that so many sincere and practising Christians are so defective in many ways: a gloomy disposition, a narrow mind, a dull heart, irritability, hardness in business matters, and so on; whereas, side by side with them, we find unbelievers

who are reasonable and self-sacrificing, and thoroughly honourable. What is the effect of the supernatural in the former, and how do the latter get on so well without it?

2. Here we have two people who are equally devout, and who participate in the same supernatural elements; from the same sources they ought to draw the same elevation of feeling and rightness of thought, and God who works within each of them should keep each from all moral deformity. But what do we observe? One of them does, indeed, manifest such elevation and right-mindedness, while the other is commonplace from every point of view, whether in mind or manner. Here again, what do the supernatural and grace effect?—We are not only perplexed, but inclined to be scandalized, when we note that the difference seems to depend upon the difference of their individual natures or early education. Can it be that the human element is that in which virtue consists?

3. Still more strange is the phenomenon which we meet with in the same individual, when he passes from a state of grace to a state of mortal sin, and *vice versâ*. He was very devout, and has long been so; sanctifying grace and infused virtues had reached a high state of development in him; all his good qualities had improved; he appeared to be good and kind, patient and charitable.

But, owing to unfortunate circumstances, he commits a mortal sin; thereupon he is stripped of sanctifying grace and infused virtues; and in spite of this, you find him just the same;* just as good and kind, and just as patient and charitable. And do not say that these virtues are in appearance only. They remain very real, and even a certain amount of love for God may exist in such an one, so that we might still suppose that he loves God.—This remark is made by St. Francis of Sales.—Once more, what are we to think of the supernatural, since its presence or absence do not modify our moral nature?†

II.—THE KEY OF THE PROBLEM

As we said at the beginning, the solution of the question is to be found in the true notion of the supernatural element and of its relation to our nature. We will explain this briefly. This subject demands the use of theological terminology; but here, so as to make ourselves understood by everyone, we shall have recourse to equivalent expressions, which do not, however, always provide an adequate formula.

* This, however, would not be the case for long.

† See *Ripalda*, Book IV., section iii., No. 13. This Master gives analogous cases, and resolves them as we are about to do.

I. *The constitution of the supernatural life.* —This life is constituted of two elements; the element added to our soul, which *transforms it:* and then, the movement impressed on it by God, which *makes it act.*

The transforming element is sanctifying grace, always accompanied by infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Sanctifying grace transforms the substance of the soul: infused virtues, its faculties.* It is a divine unction communicating its nature to the soul and adding itself thereto as incandescence is added to iron in the furnace. But though thus wonderfully invested, our nature remains itself; our faculties keep the same scope and the same tendencies; and nothing in us is radically altered. In vain will sanctifying grace be increased,† so far as making any *intrinsic* amelioration in our nature is concerned: the incandescence will show a whiter heat, but the iron will remain the same iron.

* They do not create but produce.—Sanctifying grace is not a substance; but a transformation cannot subsist in itself, it is a new form communicated to a substance or being already existing.—A living being possesses substance and faculties of activity; the supernatural has not these, but makes use of them by borrowing them of our nature.

† Sanctifying grace and infused virtues and gifts increase all together and in the same proportion; this indicates a very different mode of existence from that which belongs to our human virtues.

The impulse imparted by God to make us act in the supernatural order is called *actual grace.*—Let us proclaim it aloud once for all : not a single act in this order can be done without this grace ; and its impulse is such an absolute necessity to these acts that it must inspire and render them acceptable, and sustain them all through.—Having said this much, we shall speak with more freedom of our personal *rôle :* for, if grace gives to an act all its supernatural value, the act is nevertheless our own, and could not take place without us.—Our part is to co-operate with grace ; but we have the power, alas ! to withdraw ourselves from it.

II. *Conditions of the activity of this life.*—Since actual grace and my own free will are the two immediate principles of every supernatural act, it follows that these acts will be more frequent and intense and perfect, according as actual *grace* is *more abundant* and my *will better disposed.*

But it will be vain for grace to abound and for my will to be well disposed, for the impulse communicated will pursue its course with more or less facility, according as it meets *helps* or *hindrances* on its way.

These helps and hindrances are : within us, our good qualities and defects ; outside us, favourable or disadvantageous surroundings. Thus, firmness of character will be a help towards constancy in our resolutions ; and

weakness, a risk of giving them up.—Recollection will be a favourable environment ; a life of worldly amusement, a hindrance.—Prayer has its place apart: it is *God's special reserve.* By it, I can face everything, and make everything good. Have I no acquired virtues, no strength of will, and no external support ? Then, I pray ; and, if need be, actual grace will enable me, like St. Peter, to walk on the tossing waves.

It is our part, then, to co-operate with grace in every way ; by resolution of will ; better still, by virtuous habits ; by choosing, as we may, favourable conditions ; lastly, by the wonderful resource of prayer.

What a *rôle* is this ! And, in this *rôle,* what wisdom on God's part ! The grand supernatural element enters into our poor nature, and yet does not enslave it ; and grace does all through us without annihilating us. And this divine state is entrusted to our human hands ; our free will is able to take hold of it and to become more noble through it ; it can also refuse to make use of it, and, at any moment, it can pass it aside. Our liberty, which is a means of human perfection, continues thus the means of supernatural perfection. Our dignity called for this, and our nobility results from it. What would be the good of a being who was forcibly dragged into goodness ? He would not *make himself,* he would be *made :*

he would not have that kind of participation in creative power, which is the distinguishing characteristic of God in the infinite, and of angels and men in the restricted sphere, of the intelligence.

III. *The rôle of infused virtues.*—It is the *rôle* of infused virtues to uplift our natural faculties so as to be able to act in a supernatural manner. These transformations are of the highest value.

They are called virtues for want of any more exact term, but the word is not altogether a fitting one. In fact, it is not in them, but in our natural faculties, that, under the form of habits, the growth of tendencies produced by the repetition of virtuous acts, even supernatural acts, accumulates.

Christian virtue will then be an alliance between these two elements: the supernatural element communicating its *quality* to our natural habits, and finding in this alliance *vital powers* for subsistence and for action. (See Ripalda, *De ente supernaturali*, lib. iv., *spect.* i., ii., iii.)

IV. *The mode of increase of our virtues.*—It is here that attention is required. The increase of the supernatural element cannot take place in the same way as the increase of the natural element. In fact, the natural element increases like anything else which has a life of its own, by *growth; i.e.*, it in-

creases and grows stronger in itself. On the contrary, the supernatural element increases, if we may thus speak, by *external additions;* it receives them directly from God, like a material body which increases in temperature ; like some stuff which acquires a deeper dye by being dipped afresh.

But does not, then, sanctifying grace improve *our natural qualities* in us ? No ; we are right in thinking that it does not change what it finds.—It is nevertheless a cause of amelioration, in this sense, that its presence attracts actual graces, the help of which is always useful and sometimes indispensable ; but here again, free will intervenes, for it may welcome or refuse the proffered aid.

To those who wonder that such marvels should thus adorn our souls without betraying their presence more plainly, we reply : the vast oak with all its crowded foliage is found in germ in the simple acorn ; and do we not find the bird in the egg and the butterfly in the chrysalis ?—Does not the microscope show us a whole world of strange organisms in a little drop of water ?—Mystery is all around us—we are left in ignorance in both spheres ;—and on every wise mind is laid the duty of modesty and of reasonable submission.

III.—THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

The knot of the whole question lies, as we have said, in an exact notion of the *rôle* played by the supernatural element. We shall prove this by going back to our examples.

1. Here is a sincere Christian who has been born with a rather unfortunate disposition, and he keeps his defects in spite of his religious practices, if such religious practices are not *intense, i.e.*, if they do not determine intentional efforts towards his moral improvement, and this is, unfortunately, what usually happens.*

There, on the other hand, is one who is without religion, but with innate good qualities, and he remains amiable, honest, upright, if he makes such efforts as are

* We beg the thoughtful to give all their attention to this remark. It explains much that is bewildering: the little difference there is between unbelievers and the general run of Christians; the ineffectiveness of the religious action of those of poor character who wish to win back their dearest to religion;—the small progress made when holy practices are carelessly performed.

The remark is true of communities as well as of individuals: a Catholic nation which retains its outward practices, but allows its inward activity to fall away, and also, perhaps, its sense of goodness, does not revive. It must never be forgotten that intensity alone helps progress. It is a moral law of God's, which He will not abandon to our caprices.

necessary. Certainly, human freedom is a frail thing; but it retains a fairly ample capacity of doing good, and it also receives from God certain secret influences, which, if they are not grace, are yet merciful helps.

2. Why should we be scandalized because God *allows the existence* of such marked differences between those who are given to the same pious practices? Would He be acting wisely, if He did not respect the *natural dispositions* which He has implanted in each one of us, and the *training* resulting from human causes, the principles of which He has laid down? He does not make merit depend on these, and this is just; but He allows virtue to be stamped with the peculiar character which they give, and this is wise.

However, even in this order of improvement, piety exercises an influence which is all the more powerful according to its enlightenment and activity; it is not unusual to see Christians, in spite of their commonplace condition, rise to an extraordinary height of thought and feeling. These thoughts and feelings have been formed by a sort of divine education in the bright light of faith and in the transforming ardour of love. Many of the devout remain inferior in feeling and in type, because their virtue is poor in quality.

3. The daily occurrence of people passing from a state of grace into a state of mortal

sin, without showing any outward sign of it, is explained by the fact that there has been no change in their moral *nature*.

Since they keep the *same inclinations*, they experience the same feelings and are led to do the same acts; and what is more, in spite of sin, they retain, along with their innate qualities, those they have acquired by the practice of supernatural acts. Acts of holy disinterestedness and of Christian patience have developed in them habits of disinterestedness and of patience; acts of divine love have developed the riches of their hearts; and all these improvements have been accumulated in the faculty which produced such acts (and which called them forth), and there they still remain.

NOTE.—The supernatural act produces two effects: first, it merits an increase of sanctifying grace, and God contributes this Himself; and then, it causes an increase of power, and this is supplied by our own nature. The last effect, we repeat, only occurs if the act is intense: a faculty cannot be formed by weak acts.

IV.—PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

From the above considerations follow conclusions of the highest importance so far as *fervour* is concerned; let us summarize them.

1. There can be *acts* which are really holy

and meritorious, and which yet do not increase our vital activity, because they involve a certain amount of dissipation, like the pilgrimages of which *The Imitation of Christ* speaks. There are many works of this kind.

2. There are *devotional exercises* which improve us very little, because they contain elements of progress in too small a degree: they have too little light, affection, effort, in them. It is, therefore, prudent to select such as are stimulating, uplifting, and formative, such as meditation, the particular examen, the presence of God, and the like.

3. There are *devotions* which are good in themselves and useful for the maintenance of prayer, but which do not effect much in the way of progress; such are those which are made of vocal prayers and external practices. Let us give them their place, but in moderation—let us not be overburdened with them.

4. There are *virtues* that uplift rather than consolidate us. In this matter, let us rather follow the counsel of St. Francis of Sales, who recommended people to keep to the smaller practical virtues which grow at the foot of the Cross: gentleness, humility, patience, and charity.—Beware of any virtue that does not require effort and mortification.

V.—ERRORS AS TO THE EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION

This question is resolved by the principles which we have just expounded ; but we deal with it separately, because it demands a special explanation.

It is of faith that Holy Communion produces an *increase of sanctifying grace,* provided only that it finds the soul free from grave sins. Most unfitting dispositions and the most voluntary venial sins do not prevent this effect. The soul has life ; the Sacrament has the power of increasing this life ; its mere reception suffices : fresh degrees of sanctifying grace are therefore conferred.

This is the principle on which the partisans of frequent communion rely. Perhaps they do not pay enough attention to the second principle, which is not less true : the *increase of strength* results, not from the degrees of sanctifying grace, but from the abundance of actual graces and from the intensity of personal effort : but, it must be well noted that a communion made in deplorable conditions is not of such a character as to draw down graces of this kind ; it does not arouse ardour of will, and does not improve one's moral nature.

At the same time, this way of acting no

doubt involves a want of propriety, and sometimes a kind of disrespect, towards so worthy a Guest. This carelessness and off-handedness lower the ideas we ought to have of holy things, and weaken the habit of respect. Who can fail to see how easily this way of acting may extend from so high an action to the least of acts, for instance, to prayer and duty? This, indeed, is not the way to give a true temper to the weak. This is not the way to raise the guilty.

Are we, then, adversaries of frequent communion? Far from it; we look upon it as the first of all our resources for the soul's uplifting as well as for her progress; but we do not attribute the improvement of virtue to the increase of sanctifying grace *apart from* effort. This distinction clears up the following cases.

1. Do you desire Holy Communion, or at any rate, do you feel the need of it? Do not consider so much whether you have virtues and merits; look and see only if you are making any *efforts:* efforts for your preparation and thanksgiving, efforts to overcome yourself and to please God.—In these conditions there is nothing to hinder you from communicating often; but go forward by degrees, for a love which is still weak gets tired of familiarity, and some appetite is needed to get the benefit of any food.

2. Have you had the misfortune of fall-

ing into serious, perhaps grave sins? Never mind! If you are *making a fight* of it, and if you are *praying*, communicate often, provided that your communions are always sufficiently prepared for: here communion is the remedy.

3. The same advice cannot be given to those in whom this great act has no stimulative effect: little preparation and hasty acts of thanksgiving at the time, and still less the day before and the day after—no devotional exercises—no special prayers added for this intention—no sacrifice—not even a renewal of good-will in ordinary life! —No, here, indeed, though communion certainly brings its increase of sanctifying grace, it brings no increase of vigour.*

A delicate question.—What are we to think of frequent communions in certain small bodies of people, in schools, for instance? If, by the *means employed taken as a whole*, we find that, in spite of human frailty, *true fervour* seems to reign, frequent communion may be favoured; the *general result* will answer to your hopes.—But if the environment is not of this propitious character, or if it has fallen off, be on your guard; you will run the risk of bitter disappointments. To sow and plant is praiseworthy in itself; but to sow in uncultivated or exhausted ground is illogical.

* Let there be no misunderstanding: a certain *actual* fervour is required, not a *state* of fervour.

Conclusion.—This doctrine of the supernatural element brings us face to face with an unexpected and very suggestive conclusion : a given person may increase his glory and happiness in heaven, while bringing upon himself long and dreadful chastisement in Purgatory or in this world, and that by the same acts. And here is the proof of it.

The degrees of our glory or happiness in heaven correspond exactly with the degrees of sanctifying grace we shall bring with us to it.* But sanctifying grace is increased : 1. by the action of the Sacraments, as we have just said ; 2. by every meritorious act. An act is meritorious when it is good in itself and done in God's name. These two sufficient conditions are met with in a host of acts : in giving an alms which entails no sacrifice, in any service which would be rendered in any case, and so on. On the other hand, disrespect, and especially venial sins intervening either in lukewarm communions or in the case of certain good actions, may, unfortunately, be very numerous, and are due to be punished.

Very well, you may say, be it so, I shall be punished, but at any rate, I shall have

* Venial sin does not take away any degree of sanctifying grace, this is certain ; and absolution restores, in this respect, all the degrees of sanctifying grace which existed before any mortal sin ; this is the general opinion.

gained so far as heaven is concerned!—Undeceive yourself: any want of dignity in your communion, by diminishing its fervour, diminishes its *power* to win merit, and exposes you to all sorts of relapse.

VI.—Errors as to the Function of Prayer

Certainly, one cannot affirm too strongly the influence of prayer in the work of spiritual progress ; but one may easily make mistakes in expecting from it what it cannot give ; thus it is that we see unjustifiable discouragement follow upon presumptuous confidence.

You have prayed, and prayed much, and you find that you are just as lacking in fervour. Your prayers have not even prevented you from falling into lamentable sins. What good is there, then, in praying ? Prayer gives you neither progress nor self-control nor perseverance !

No, prayer is not destined to *give these goods*, but to make us *acquire* them. It is not meant to lessen, and still less to replace, personal effort, but to sustain it and to complete it. No, it is not intended to lead you to perfection all of a sudden, and in a kind of miraculous way, but to *help* you in your struggle to attain to it.

If God had imparted to it, in most cases, the power you suppose it to possess, He would have done an injury to our moral nature. The moral order, as we have shown, demands that personal effort should be the ordinary

means of our defence and of our progress; it also demands that virtue shall be established only by the repetition of acts and by giving time to it. These laws are wise; they are in harmony with our nature and respect our personal dignity, for we are free beings.

Free but fallen, and therefore we are weak. Prayer is like the hand of a child clinging to the hand of his father. Why does the child want to be carried?—Is the road covered with darkness? Let us call for light, but as soon as it shines, let us go forward.—Prayer must first of all beg for grace which is the soul's food, and for pardon which is the constant need of our wretchedness; and it may also, though in the most filial spirit, ask for a few joys on earth; but it must never ask a wise God to allow effort to be dispensed with.

Prayer is a touching invention of divine love; it creates an entire range of frequent and intimate relationships between father and child. If there were no need of prayer, how many hearts would remain dumb! But if our Father wishes His child's cry for help, our God does not wish for nothing but a cry.

In the supernatural order, it is true that we can do nothing of ourselves; but it is equally true that God does not mean to dispense with our co-operation. He who so far misunderstands the conditions of salvation as to think that he will persevere and

advance by the aid of his own will alone, will certainly prove the truth of these words of Holy Scripture : " Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." On the other hand, he who neglects all effort and confines himself to prayer, runs a risk of remaining always imperfect.

St. Ignatius sums up these remarks in these felicitous words : " Act, as if God were not coming to your assistance : pray to Him, as if you were expecting nothing from yourself."

II

ILLUSIONS OR ERRORS AS TO OURSELVES

1. The Illusion that Consolation means Holiness

By consolation, we mean the sensible relish that fills the heart, and makes prayer agreeable, and acts of virtue easy.

It is usually the *sign* of a good state of the soul, but it is not virtue. It often precedes it, and its office is to begin one's training in goodness. This state, indeed, is rather an habitual characteristic of anyone's commencement of life of piety; and, like the spring, it is full of flowers and warm breezes and sweet odours.—Later on, consolation returns at certain periods, when God is pitiful of our sorrows or needs; but only a few souls enjoy it at all constantly.

Certainly, we must feel no distrust of this grace nor take it to be an illusion; it is even allowable to desire it like "the milk that little children ask for"; but it is important to be, above all, simple and trusting, know-

ing how to accept it with love, and how to lose it without anxiety. We must specially beware of attempting to secure it otherwise than by faithfulness and desire for it.

The illusion, then, consists in believing that one is holy because one has consolation, and these are the errors which it induces.

1. A person who thinks he has attained holiness looks upon any feeling of *fear* as an imperfection, even if it is caused by his own weaknesses : then prayer will be less earnest and effort less assiduous.

When we think we are perfect, we very easily *neglect* the *means* of becoming so : watchfulness over ourselves, the use of little expedients and, particularly, the exercise of solid virtues ; does not consolation replace all these in a better way ? Is not consolation synonymous with love ?

2. *Vain self-complacency* is one of the most natural dangers of consolation. How is this to be avoided, if consolation is confused with holiness ? We think we are persons apart, very favoured by God and far advanced in His ways ; we look down upon poor souls working on without any relish for their work as far beneath us. This may be merely an impression, but it is in every way a poisonous impression.

3. Lastly, under the influence of the same mistake, we seek *above all* whatever induces consolation ; it becomes the end of all our

piety. God's will and God Himself take a secondary place, at any rate in practice. We may even come to sacrifice positive duties, because they might deprive us of some sensible sweetness.

Conclusion.—If consolation happens to be wanting in such persons, then they are quite upset : their courage is gone, and they begin to bewail themselves and to let themselves go. How many have virtually ceased to belong to God the day that consolation left them !

If they feel that they are unfortunate, it is because they were seeking themselves and not God ; and if they give way to-day, it is because they have let themselves grow weak, for they were feeding themselves on their own self-satisfaction. Some of them even find that these spiritual delights have given them tastes and needs which demand to be followed by pleasures of another kind, like the widows spoken of by St. Paul.

" Let us not attach ourselves to consolation, but to the God of consolation "; let us rather regard it as a proof of our weakness and imperfection, which God has pity on. He does not show all these little attentions to His nobler spirits : these as a rule meet with great trials.

II. The Illusion of Those who are sustained by their Surroundings and think Themselves Steadfast

Our *surroundings* exercise a wonderful influence over us: they appear to assimilate us to themselves. Unconsciously, we feel and think and act like those about us.

When the surroundings are favourable, we are borne towards piety by the general current. The girl at school, the youth in the seminary, the novice in the noviciate, always have to beware of the illusion that they have acquired steadfastness in virtue because virtue is easy for them.—If they are fervent, it is because all the influences around them stimulate them to fervour. If their disposition is peaceful, it is because nothing in their surroundings comes to disturb their senses.—Even the practice of mortifications ought not to reassure them altogether: who knows how far this generosity is due to the common tendency? Who knows how much *local amour-propre* there may be in the relish they feel for such things?

The illusion of steadfastness produces a rashness in running risks and a recklessness as to securing help. Passing from fervent to indifferent surroundings is a great trial. Think of this in good time.*

* See *Formation à l'Humilité*, First Week, Fifth Meditation.

III. The Illusion of Believing One's State of Imperfection is due to External Causes

To attribute our imperfection to outside causes is certainly an illusion. God, who desires our perfection, gives us in one way or another the means of tending towards it. To think otherwise would be to deny God's wisdom and providence. But we do not push the argument to such an extreme ; to justify ourselves, we find it simpler to blame the difficulties we meet with, occupations which overload us, and the want of spiritual aid which we deplore.

Then, what happens ? Instead of working to change ourselves, we wait for circumstances to change—we sigh for some modification in our manner of life (our work, place, those about us, or perhaps, our vocation) ; we look with envy at those who are perfect, not to imitate them, but to bewail ourselves, because we have not their nature or position, or the help with which they are surrounded. If only I were as free and as much supported as they ! If I only had as much time for praying ! —You deplore the troubles and embarrassments of your actual state, and, avoiding any struggle, you go straight on mechanically, without hope or courage.

But be sure that everywhere there are troubles and difficulties, and disappointments even. It is the great law of our poor fallen nature; it is also the means God uses to mould us in perfection. Difficulties overcome make us brave; humiliations keep us in our proper place; deceptions make us turn to God; sufferings prevent us from resting satisfied with this world: "all works for the good of those who love God," all is disconcerting to those who seek themselves alone.

It is not by means of other people, or in other places, that we shall find piety, if we do not find it where God has already put it for us. He will give us in due proportion all that we need. Our present state may be only a passing state; but if it were the appointed way for me for the rest of my life, could not my divine Master provide the means to maintain me therein?

To such disturbed souls we would say: get rid of these thoughts and regrets and desires. It is not things in themselves which are holding you back; but your *obsessions* about these things. *Love*, love all that God has given you; and then, even in bitterness you will find hidden sweetness.

A still more manifest illusion is that of one who is embarrassed by affections that are too keen, and who, instead of having the courage to shake them off, waits for circum-

stances to set him free, being persuaded that then he will begin to rise. Such an unfortunate one forgets that God is not at his beck and call, and that His grace will perhaps be no longer available when the soul is ready to follow it. He does not consider that, in the meantime, his unhappy inclinations are increasing, and that when the hindrance is gone, his vigour will have vanished !

IV.—The Illusion of Those who think that They are called to do Great Things and who neglect Present Duties

This illusion is like the last, so far as it leads to the same result: a distaste for present duties. It differs from the last, in that its impulse comes from pride.

You are full of ardour and possess lofty aspirations. It is true that all this has so far only shown itself in an ill-regulated manner. Sometimes you have gone in for an excess of mortifications, followed by long periods of relapse; sometimes you have overloaded yourself with prayers, all too soon abandoned. The worst of it is, that this ardour has sometimes gone astray in human affections, and then you took an exaggerated view of the feelings you experienced, of the elevation of your ardour, and of the day when you would turn to God with all your might. The thought of such saints as St. Teresa and St. Augustine haunted your mind, and plunged you in a sea of vague desire for the glory of God, without inducing you to determine to devote yourself to Him to-day by the faithful performance of present duty. Certainly, one may be called to a high degree of virtue by

God, and be inwardly and deeply thrilled thereby ; but then, this inward conviction—and this is its characteristic sign—will not permit you to think that you have any right to keep God waiting.

V.—The Illusion of Those who are fairly well instructed in Things Spiritual and think that Spiritual Reading is Unnecessary

1. Try to appreciate thoroughly this well-known truth : what acts upon us is not what we know, but what is *present* in our minds, and especially what we actually *feel*.

What we know by prior reading and study does not realize these conditions. In fact, how much of it remains ? Perhaps a just, but dry, and often confused, idea : particular details have disappeared ; but it is exactly these details which give relief and vitality to any truth. If, indeed, we have faithfully kept the details in our memory, they are nevertheless in a latent condition and do not circulate throughout our moral being ; they do not enrich our conceptions or stimulate our impulses, and, in a word, renew our life. For every life requires constant renewal ; this we are taught by the continual beating of our hearts. The heart sends the blood to the farthest extremities of our bodies ; but the blood is richer or poorer according to the regularity and prudence with which it has been nourished by the food we have taken.

The material for our spiritual activity is found in holy thoughts which are transformed into feelings, and thence into strength.

2. But who is to supply us with such thoughts? Who is to renew them in us incessantly? God's word heard or read: books of spiritual reading, sermons, and conversations with good people.

It is easy to get books nowadays, and one book may sometimes transform a soul! And yet we do not take the trouble to know the best, nor are we eager to procure them; we wait for them to reach us by any sort of chance, by some one else's initiative! If it were a question of some remedy, or of anything else necessary for our material life, we should make enquiries, and be eager to do it; on books of spiritual reading we do not allow ourselves to spend what we are ready to lavish on mere trifles!

3. To those who say: I do not care for reading, I prefer meditation and find it suits me better, we may reply: well and good! The renewal of your life is assured. What does it matter, if your thoughts are often the same? Do we not feed daily on the same food?

There is, however, a danger that threatens those who remain too much apart from other people's ideas; it is that their eccentricity may either send them astray or lower them, according to circumstances; and we advise most of these persons to come into touch sometimes with other *forms* of truth and feeling. Do they think that a conversation with a saint who was passing their way

would not open up to them any new horizon nor awaken in them any fresh order of feeling? Would they not at any rate gain from it an increase of fervour? But books written by saints give us of their best.

4. Hence, the illusion we are fighting against does not consist in believing wrongly that one is well-instructed enough in spiritual things, but in concluding from this that one may dispense with reading and hearing God's word. From such abstinence would result an impoverishment of which one does not take due account, and often great narrowness of mind.

5. It is a very serious thing to make a good choice of our spiritual food. There are books that enlighten and others that stimulate; there are some that are sure guides in the ordinary ways of God; there are books that uplift, and those that open up a closer spiritual intimacy.—Let us consult our own needs and tastes, and decide according to our own experience.

6. What often prevents our reading, and especially our re-reading, is this; that we no longer have the stimulus of *curiosity* to urge us on. We have read it before, and we know everything we are about to read over again.—If, however, we look into the matter very closely, we discover what we are seeking, almost unconsciously; and this largely contributes to our pleasure.

VI.—The Illusion of Those who think that They are fully Trained, and who no longer look for Direction

To be well trained is to know the end, the laws, and the means of piety; it is having had long experience of them; lastly, it is going easily along the way marked out for us.

Everyone admits that, to get to this point, direction is indispensable in the same way as a master's help is required for initiation into any art; but many are persuaded that they can do without any direction afterwards.

If this conclusion were true, then this should be the one object at which direction ought to stop short. Let us see whether it does not produce other results.

1. Who has not observed this phenomenon, that in explaining a situation we clear it up; the presence of a listener stimulates us, and the necessity of making ourselves understood *disentangles* our ideas.

2. We are *too near* ourselves to see ourselves properly; another is just the right distance off. What a number of illusions deceive us which would not deceive us in the presence of others. There are those who are very clever in giving advice, yet who

hesitate to make any decision in their own case. Others make the mistake of not hesitating enough.

3. Direction gives *confidence* and *courage*. Even in the most ordinary matters, every prudent person has a remote fear of making mistakes; this fear is entirely dissipated by the director's words; thus set free, we shall act with an altogether different kind of animation.

4. It is not light that is mainly wanting, but rather *strength*. But direction offers us this invaluable element. Respect for a witness, the authority of a counsellor to whom we shall have to give an account, these give our resolutions a steadfastness which they would not find in our own conscience.

5. But let us leave secondary reasons and enter fully into the supernatural: direction places us under God's authority: "*he who heareth you, heareth Me,*" and God attaches to such obedience the promise of victory: "He who obeyeth shall speak of nothing but victories."

6. This wise practice which is a safeguard, is also a *lesson*, a lesson we are prone to forget in riper years: "Except you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Our constant need is to make ourselves little and humble and docile; and direction makes us all these.

What a difference there is between the

person who allows himself to be directed, and one who refuses! It is the sign of a virtue which is at any rate at a standstill not to feel the need of direction.—To do without it because one has nothing to say or submit, nothing to receive, is a proof that one has but *little life.*

VII.—The Illusion of Those who are unable to find a Director

Have you prayed? Have you tried to find one?—Read over again the counsel of St. Francis of Sales in his *Introduction to a Devout Life.*

Well, you have prayed and sought, but you have not found. Is it not because your requirements have been too exacting?

There are two things to look for from a director: supervision and sanction; we shall easily get these if we fulfil the part we have to play. Our *rôle* is to *take the initiative,* setting forth our views and proposing our resolutions with all docility and simplicity. —Then, we must *give a faithful account* of ourselves. You will easily find a priest to be your witness and supervisor; and, having once secured this, you can advance.

Unfortunately, we are too particular: we dream of an initiative which shall forestall everything; an ardent zeal to fire us; an affectionate interest to console us.—Would it always be a good thing, if we found it?—And if God denies it, it must surely be because it would not be for *our* good, or because we have not hitherto deserved it.

VIII.—The Illusion of Those who abuse the Direction They get

1. There are some people, mostly of weak intellect, who ask for direction even in purely material matters, even in the most intimate details of family and other life, without being in any way bound to do so by conscience.

They act thus ; some to get peace ; others to give their least acts the merit of obedience. This is to misunderstand matters and to compromise direction. Peace is not to be found in these petty details and repetitions : they lead to nothing except disturbance and loss of time.—This is never a necessity, except from the effect of having once acquired a bad habit.

Submit your principles of conduct and apply them honestly : that is obedience ; and if this virtue be thus put into practice, its merit and influence will be carried into the remotest of our actions.

But to ask your director for decisions which he is not always prepared to give, and which a host of circumstances may cause to differ, is to compromise both his authority, for he may be mistaken ; his dignity, for the matters in question are infinitely little ; and often his reputation, for in the end his intervention comes to be known, to the great prejudice of

religion, which does not recommend such practices as these.

2. A more frequent abuse is taking up a great deal of time with useless confidences and otiose questions concerning one's self; this leads to a certain amount of mental dissipation: the confessional loses its austere serenity. Seeking enlightenment is only a pretext; in reality, this abuse hides your pleasure in making complaints, your secret desire for esteem, or merely a puerile want of self-occupation.

Conclusion.—Follow the rules below:

1. Before making any *confidence,* ask yourself if God will blame you for not making it:

2. As to *questions,* never ask one which you can find answered in books at your disposal, or after taking more time to reflect upon it:

3. Do not speak of *others* unless you are really obliged, and leave the subject as soon as possible:

4. While in the confessional, always keep the feeling that the priest is a high authority whom we ought to maintain far above all pettiness.

CHAPTER III

HELPS TO FERVOUR

Attraction
Surroundings
Renewal

HELPS TO FERVOUR

FERVOUR is the impulse of the soul towards union with God. We have set forth the causes that *paralyze* it or *lead it astray;* we shall now indicate the *conditions* which *help* its growth.

Attraction, wisely discerned and faithfully followed, will impart to its progress an activity full of vitality.—Well chosen or skilfully improved *surroundings* will lend it the aid of happy influences.—Lastly, *renewal,* which is the constant need of every living creature, will keep our organs of progress sound and vigorous.

If you wish to rise, to see God close to you and to unite with Him, do not shrink from certain demands which are painful to nature, but which are a binding and necessary condition. Eternity is very long, and all through it you will enjoy an immense increase of happiness. And even now, you will find your generosity yield you peace and, perhaps, joy, for perfection is the highest form of order.

Attraction

To estimate the importance of attraction in the spiritual life, we need only get a thorough understanding of its nature.

1. An attraction is scarcely ever, if we may venture so to speak, a pure gift come from God *arbitrarily* and without any antecedent reason ; but it is rather a sort of expansion of our moral qualities on their meeting with their object. In fact, every moral quality is a power, and every power tends of itself to its own exercise. Attraction is the feeling of this need, a call towards the object which corresponds with it.

Sometimes it seems to spring from a generous idea, and this is because the idea has been a shock which awakens an unconscious moral quality, or else the light which illumines a hitherto unperceived good. There is no doubt that in many natures great resources lie sleeping, just as unexploited mines lie hidden in the depths of the earth, and just as nature conceals forces which science has not so far evoked.

2. Enjoyment accompanies attraction : but enjoyment gives an act its perfection, and a faculty its development ; in heaven, it will be the final unfolding of our being.

3. To second an attraction and to in-

crease its activity is, then, to put the vital forces of our nature at the disposal of the good. Without it, the will can certainly direct us towards the same end, but with what difficulty! Acts which are *ordered* are only kept up by efforts incessantly renewed.

God, in His wisdom, gives the good quality and the attraction towards it, both together; and if, in some cases, He seems to ask of us things which are quite contrary to our tastes, even to our supernatural tastes, it is because He has hidden in a still deeper stratum the holy passion for sacrifice, and this, too, is an attraction.

I.—Two General Attractions

First of all, let us say a few words as to the two great classes of attraction which divide men's souls: the attraction which draws us towards *intimacy*, and the attraction which draws us to *action*.

A life may be so ordered that prayer and work find an equal place in it; nevertheless, attraction will make its preference felt, and will give each soul its type. If there be two lives producing the same actions, there are no two that will produce them in the same way.

It is most important to discern one's own attraction. It is *God's call*, and we must listen to it; our attraction is also our *way*, and we must follow it, for it is the readiest and surest way of going towards perfection.

1.—Attraction towards the inner life

1. If your attraction draws you towards the inner life, and no duty controverts its movement, cultivate it by habitual *recollection* and *mental prayer;* do not think you are bound to fling yourself into action and its countless cares for the sole reason that there is good to be done; wait until God makes some *definite* demand for it upon you.

Moreover, prayer affects souls as well as action. The one obtains graces by drawing them from the divine heart; the other receives them and scatters them for God. It is the Father who gives to each of His children the part He thinks better for him. The close union of the interior life has always been regarded as the better part. Jesus does not intend that the soul who chooses this shall be kept away from it. Has He not the right to reserve to Himself alone some of the dearest affections, which will pour out their perfumes at His feet? And will not these heavenly odours, in spite of all the cloistered silence, perfume the adjoining regions with the taste for purity and the feeling for what is noble?

2. Obedience, or circumstances, or perhaps, an attraction for self-denial, which is stronger than the attraction of all these sweet things, may tear from this way even the most contemplative souls for a time, or, it may be, for ever. *God* sometimes demands such renunciations. But then, if He thus opposes the attraction He first gave with some later command, He does not contradict Himself and diminish such a soul. After making her admire and relish the charms of intimacy, he casts her into absorbing and exhausting works and cares. Her disconsolate interior life now only finds expression in sighs; but these constant sighs, arising

from a wound that never closes, give grac to the sacrificed attraction. Personal anx eties, the desire to put oneself forward, vai self-satisfaction in success and affection whic are too natural, hold in respect such widow hood nobly borne.—How many in responsibl positions owe to such divine skill as this th fruitfulness of their action and the preserva tion of their virtue !

II.—ATTRACTION TOWARDS THE ACTIVE LIFE

1. Those whom God has made for *actio* have no reason to regard themselves as dis inherited ! They can come as close to Hi and give Him as much glory. Their lov will be as great, if not of the same kind. Le them not expect to feel it as much. Thei *rôle* is self-sacrifice and courage. Let the be brave and, if need be, ready for immola tion ! By their works the heavenly Fathe will be glorified, and His children on eart find aid.

Go your way, then, with serenity and a overflowing heart. Do not be troubled b your numerous distractions or coldness o involuntary mistakes. Do not envy the lo of others ; make the most of that which ha been assigned to you. The Master offers i you with a loving smile : it is His heart' choice !

2. Well now, follow the piece of advic

which we give here : in your way of life you require a land-mark to direct you, a support to sustain you ; and both must be easy to find and simple to use. You will find them in keeping *God's will* habitually before you. This point of view may permeate everything without causing any sort of uneasiness ; it does not interrupt conversations nor head work ; my God, I am doing Thy will ! my God, Thou knowest well, this is for Thee !—O my Father, I love Thy will !

To pursue some sensible image distinctly, or to work out some pious consideration while we are occupied, necessitates a wearisome tension of the mind which leaves little profit behind. One who thinks himself bound to seek God in some more sensible manner, and who disdains this humble method, may end by finding himself thrown out of either of these two ways : definite and distinct union will fail him, and union with God's will will not grow familiar to him.

Certainly, the interior life extended into the life of action, without doing any harm to the latter or losing anything of its own, constitutes a more perfect state. Such a grace as this is rare. We may tend towards it, but we must not try to force it on ; and we should accept the loss of it without being disturbed.

3. On the other hand, a busy person ought to be more faithful than anyone else in

keeping up his devotional exercises; he should take *much time* in putting himself in the presence of God before beginning them; and, from time to time during the day, let him return to it; this is a part of the interior life which he must not give up. On days of dryness, let him be brave enough to prolong an exercise which already seems too long, even if it be only for a short time. God will reward his courage, and the consciousness of the effort he has made will give him a feeling of greater fervour.

We can say no more on this subject: what we have said is intended to reassure and guide certain persons. For their consolation, we repeat that both ways equally lead to perfection under different aspects, for perfection in either case consists entirely in the perfection of love.

II.—Certain Special Attractions

These two great ways, moreover, open up all the special attractions which we have in view, *i.e.*, those that constitute *means* of fervour.

This is the sign of a means of fervour : it stimulates our activity, and the best is that which most accelerates its movement ; consequently, that which calls to its aid the greatest amount of resources and stirs them up most keenly.

I.—REPARATION

Amongst attractions poured forth to-day by the Holy Ghost, the attraction towards *reparation* is specially to be noted.

1. The spectacle of evil is what awakens it, but a tender feeling of love is its true source. Evil does an injury to Jesus. Unfortunately, He has none but ourselves, and we are in a small minority. We feel that a mission has been entrusted to us ; God's cause becomes ours, and it obtains from us every kind of sacrifice.

2. To repair is, first of all, to *console*, and then, to *make good* the work which has been compromised. A host of feelings seizes upon us. Our ardour is made up of compassion, and of a sense of justice and honour.

3. This attraction, which generally finds its centre in Jesus, considers Him either in His Passion, which is ever full of pain; or in His Sacred Heart, which is misunderstood; or in His Eucharist, which is profaned. An increase of tenderness in loving, a wonderful fertility of thinking, devotional exercises and unselfish sorrows, result from this incessant desire to participate in incessant suffering.

4. We pray, and pray much; but we know that all redemption requires blood, the blood of our veins and hearts, and the determination to crucify ourselves by mortification.—To this is added a very noble attraction towards what is painful, because we are deeply convinced that there is something great in it.

It is easy to understand what an impulse and spirit are imparted by such a combination of motives as this!

II.—ZEAL

1. Another common attraction is that towards works of zeal. We see, no doubt, how God must be grieved by sinners; but we see these to a great extent in themselves; and their position is so alarming! Here love looks less at reparation of an injury done than at the conversion of the sinner; hence, this attraction is distinct from the last, and stirs certain of our heart's fibres.

2. It, too, produces its abundant crop of ardent desires, holy practices, helpful works, and urgent prayers. Some can only give their prayers and sufferings, and this is an immense deal to contribute ; others add their time and labours and means ; all bring their hearts.—Sometimes some dear one is the object of all one's anguish and of a whole life of reparation ; sometimes it is a whole class of souls in danger that one desires to assist, or fallen souls whom one would fain raise up. Everywhere, zeal meets with an unspeakable stimulus in beholding great wretchedness, in looking at graces individually received, and in the smile of Jesus who has been consoled. If I could only bring Him one soul, or even many souls ! Only to think that He will have won them through me, and that these souls will owe me their love for Him ; that some day we shall be near Him in heaven through all eternity !

3. If only this attraction fall like a spark in some generous soul, and lo ! every sort of ardour is aflame !—The soul has work to do ; there are no more vain griefs.—Our life belongs to others and is set free from being self-occupied.—Henceforward, prayer becomes sustaining, because we must repeat it so often for it to be heard, not by Jesus, but by those for whom we are praying ! The heart's tenderness grows ; even one's ex-

pression at last acquires the touching character of the face of some mother who has had much suffering to endure.

III.—VARIOUS SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

In *Méthodes et formules pour bien entendre la Messe* will be found fuller explanations of the following attractions: *Adoration, thanksgiving, intercession,* immolation of self *for the priesthood, reparation,* and, all through, *Eucharistic* attraction.

IV.—ATTRACTION TOWARDS PARTICULAR VIRTUES AND DEVOTIONS

1. What is there that we cannot follow in such sweet revelations of divine influence as are attractions towards particular *virtues* and different *devotions?* We shall see pass before our enchanted eyes, as it were, an interminable procession of animated groups of every heavenly hue, bearing their special banners, each with its own particular inscription, followed by its train of evils remedied, souls uplifted, and treasures of love outpoured;—all the beauties of the Church militant in her war against evils physical and moral;—every tender feeling and every energy;—all the whiteness of innocence and all the blood-stained hues of immolation!

2. Take your place in this noble array under the banner of the attraction which appeals to you most. Do not compare your *rôle* with the more brilliant *rôle* of others; for you may bring much glory to God in the humblest rank: you honour His Providence by a complete submission to painful duties; you proclaim His Fatherhood by utter trustfulness amidst the uncertainties of life. All these noble things are the hidden joys which the Church unfolds in their brightness to none but angels' eyes.

3. Particular devotions, and the help which they give, arouse confidence and open the heart; each of them makes some holy truth more deeply felt or introduces some fresh refinement into our piety; and all of them finally meet in the great whole, which is the mystical Body of Jesus. In their diversity they have gone their various ways full of the desire of purveying to Him from all sides fresh elements, for all these supernatural acts, whether small or great, visible or invisible, under whatever name, that of Mary or of the Saints or of the Church, all only do one thing which comprises the whole of the supernatural work of God: they realize Jesus.

Surroundings

The surroundings in which we live constitute the various environment of thoughts and feelings, and especially of impressions, that affect us. We owe them not only to people ; all is full of them and evokes them. The look of places, things that strike us and things we do, gradually implant in us a kind of likeness, or determine dispositions which have a great influence upon our moral nature.

Men are deeply modified by the country they live in, by the lives they lead, or by the necessities of their existence ; and especially by their professions. A family imparts to individuals its ideas and affections and dislikes ; and the society he frequents ends in assimilating him.—What helps and what dangers there are in our flexibility of character!

Generally, one does not choose one's surroundings ; but we can usually modify them. And this is why we pass in review the various elements of which they are made up. In order to go through them easily, let us begin with those which are nearest to us.

I.—Material Surroundings

1. First of all, there is the room we live in. Why not make it into a little sanctuary? How good it is, on returning, to find it in-

dwelt by what is dear to us, wearing a welcome and intimate aspect : a crucifix in a prominent position ;—holy water, and not an empty stoup ;—a few pictures, a sacred statue which has been well chosen, before which the flowers are kept fresh ;—and, near by, a little lamp which is lighted on certain occasions, as it were to carry on our prayers.

2. Why should we not greet our beloved guests on returning home and on going away ? Why should we not sometimes kneel down before the representation of what we adore ? Why should we not repair, during the day, to this helpful solitude ; and, as we are falling asleep, why should we not let our glances wander round these emblems which remind us of heaven ?

3. Luxurious display, by its brilliant appearance, suggests an impression of self-love, and, by its comfort, a vague yearning for the gratification of the senses.—Have in your room something poor to remind you of Bethlehem or Nazareth, or the cell of the religious.—Choose for your personal use whatever is most insignificant.—This detachment will revive the calm thought of things eternal.

4. There are things that have to be done ; prudence requires you not to cherish any illusion as to their necessity and as to the position they must occupy. You have perhaps accepted some extra duty, which

could be lightened without causing any noticeable inconvenience. Examine the matter without such prejudices as come from habit. The supernatural point of view has certainly a right to find a place in the making of your estimate. Does this particular material advantage compensate you for too great a sacrifice of your spiritual interests? Are not some quite optional occupations merely a kind of dissipation?—Know how to retain a little leisure for living with God.

II.—MORAL SURROUNDINGS

1. Our moral surroundings consist primarily in our relationships.—Have you not been satisfied to accept those which your birth or circumstances have prepared for you? Then, have the desire to constitute them for yourself by prudently eliminating such persons or families as possess an unfavourable influence, and by drawing towards those who will make you or yours better.

Do not conclude that you ought to neglect your own family or old-established friends, because they are lacking in the mark of piety. It is not necessary for *everything* to carry you towards God; it is advantageous that *something* should remind you of Him; but it is enough, if nothing keeps you away from Him.

On the question of choosing friends, read the chapters in *The Introduction to a Devout Life*, which deal with it wisely.

2. Nothing influences us more than books: reading is real conversation, generally of a careful, and often of a striking kind. By it, the mind may be enlightened or filled with errors, and have its ideas raised or lowered. Therein the heart, too, finds healthy emotions or dangerous fascinations. Bad novels are much more to be dreaded than theatres, even if it were only because they are always at hand. Refer to what we have said on the importance of *spiritual reading* (vol. i, p. 208; also vol. ii, p. 324); out of the thoughts of the saints, the memory of their examples and the beautiful truths of religion, make yourself an environment in which you will freely inhale the breath of heaven, where you will see nothing but purity, and where each thing exhales an odour that is divine.

With this object, have a library of spiritual authors. Choose them carefully; note those which do your soul most good; make them your daily friends.

Beware of books which, without being bad, fill your mind and heart with uneasiness. Most novels are of this kind, and faith is involved in them more often than you think.

3. There is no need to treat at length of pleasures and amusements; St. Francis of Sales has laid down the rules of this subject

in his *Introduction to a Devout Life.* Only note the difference there is, from the point of view of piety, between accepting them and trying to hunt them out,—using them and giving yourself up to them, amusing yourself and letting yourself be dissipated in this way.—Further, be guided by the effects produced.

III.—CHRISTIAN SURROUNDINGS

1. In our days, *parochial works* have become more numerous and more living: Associations of Christian mothers—The Children of Mary—Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Sacred Heart—The Holy Rosary—and a host of others. Each of them gives rise to religious gatherings in which fervour is catching.

Even associations for charity, by the co operative organization they necessitate, are a help towards piety: clubs and guilds—organized work for churches and for the poor: such institutions will become more than ever centres of religious activity.

In such surroundings, the heart expands, holy friendships are formed, and the enthusiasm of some becomes the help of others.

2. The *Third Orders* go farther still; they introduce several elements of the religious life into the life of the world, and constitute a kind of spiritual family in which souls find

instruction, counsel and affection, and, if need be, gentle remonstrances. The world still re-echoes with the praises accorded by Leo XIII to the Third Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic. Several others of more recent date also received the approbation of this great Pope.

3. In our latter days, societies have been founded which specially aim at a life of perfection in the world. One of them is better known to ourselves.

Its founder, one of the greatest directors of souls of the century, founded it with his rare *savoir-faire,* and sacrificed himself in its service. The First Mother who died before him has now been declared Venerable. Their spirit, which is the spirit of Jesus, has survived them. While very broad in welcoming all classes of people, whether widows or married women or girls, this society nevertheless shows itself very strict as to the moral qualities required. Who does not really wish for perfection with its glorious toil must not knock at its doors. Its methods of training,* moreover, are so strong that they need not envy in any way those of the

* The table for the conscience, which is given at the end of this volume, is borrowed from this admirable method of training. It is merely one pearl taken from a rich shrine.

The same is true of their Probations, of which we shall soon have something to say.

best provided noviciates. The direction is entirely in the hands of the priest, and is obeyed with the most respectful and trustful readiness. Everything in this association is simple and elevated, discreet and practical. Every soul is led in her own special way; every life proceeds amidst its own customary duties. The members have no distinguishing mark, unless it be in their agreeableness of manners: a mixture of kindliness and peace.

Numerous good works have sprung from this centre of fervour, for the duty of perfection carries with it the duty of action. All the ardours of beneficent zeal are found in abundance therein, and are ready to be expended under wise guidance.

Renewal

I

We are remarkably like those plants which have been transformed by culture. Like them, we are subject to a fatal tendency to *revert to the primitive type,* unless we resist it with constant care.

In our case, the primitive type is, first of all, the purely human life, and then, by increasing degeneracy, the life of the senses and passions. This inferior life is ceaselessly in process of taking possession of our thoughts and feelings, and will stifle supernatural thoughts and feelings which do not grow of their own accord.

To this process is added *that of forgetfulness,* the inexorable result of time, which slowly and gradually blots out our impressions and memories, and even our best and firmest resolutions. And if, by great faithfulness we escape such injury, if we firmly remain in the fulfilment of our duties and in the continuance of our devotional exercises and affections, we fall under the influence of another principle which is no less dangerous, the *staleness of habit.* Who has not experienced the grief of loving in the long-run less sensibly, of willing less ardently, because the stimulus of novelty was wearing off ?

II

Have you noted the deep meaning contained in the word renewal? *To make new* means to rejuvenate what is old and to revive what is wearing out.

We must then make up our minds to this: we shall not maintain our spiritual life in a vigorous condition unless we continually renew it.

Have we lost all relish and spirit and consolation? We must ask ourselves whether an absence of renewal is not the cause. We are like those who cannot find or bring into their families any new elements of *interest;* from such monotonous relationships easily comes weariness. How many souls would be in more filial relations with God, if they only took the trouble to vary the means they use.

The occupations of life absorb us; long continued troubles throw us into torpor; our various habits keep us enclosed in a narrow circle; a thousand depressing influences weigh us down; we are disappointed in ourselves and others, we are tired of the perpetual fight for self-control, we are indisposed without knowing why, though we feel that we are disorganized by the indisposition!—We go on our way with weary and halting step. Our eyes are dim and cannot

discern the beauties of the road: there are no more songs on our lips, and no more joy in our hearts.—What, then, is wanting in our love, which is still true? Perhaps, some means of renewal.

III

By renewal, we do not now refer to devotional exercises. Their aim is to *maintain* our spiritual life in a normal way. It is the function of some of them (examination of conscience, vigilance) to eliminate the hurtful elements which creep in; of others (meditation, recollection) to bring in new elements in the form of thoughts and feelings; of all of them, to develop fervour. We may, then, look upon them as its *organs of activity*.

Now, it is just these organs that have need of *special* renewal. Their function has become hampered, their activity less vital. Do we not sometimes find that communion itself has become a half-conscious habit? The occupations and duties and exercises of zealous activity end in becoming a sort of routine; and the feeling of this or that virtue in the long-run loses something of its clearness and spirit, and even of its extent.

The means we are about to propose remain mere counsels. They are not in any way

obligatory. But they are in use in religious communities and associations, and among devout people; fervour invariably accompanies those who employ them courageously: these are surely reasons which recommend them to our esteem.

I.—THE DAILY MORNING RENEWAL

i. Its Raison d'être

There is a renewal which it is important to make every morning; it is that of our *dispositions* Our dispositions are forces ready for action on condition that they are really conscious; but, on the contrary, they are ineffective if they slumber deep within us.

The disposition, which appears to include all the rest in the sphere of progress, is *open-heartedness*, which is a mixture of confidence and courage. In this state, life is abundant, the outlook certain, and decisions are clear and prompt; the soul is healthy, and, above us, the air is pure!—But who finds himself habitually in such a happy disposition? Who does not feel that it is needful to be constantly restoring its free play?

This is a care that should busy us especially in the morning. Have you not remarked the effect of the night upon your thoughts and impressions? The soul gets materialized, supernatural thoughts are wiped out, the will begins to languish and you find you have vague aspirations towards the life of the senses; such is your instinctive feeling. It is the awakening of nature and the vague unfolding of its desires. Such a state is no sin, but it is a danger. Thus embarrassed

and enervated and insipid, what should we be capable of if we did not hasten to renew our lowered supernatural sense ?

ii. Its Practice

Therefore, we advise this little exercise, which begins with an act of humility and is completed with an act of confidence.

I. *An act of humility.*—Kneel down at your *prie-Dieu* or by your bedside, and kiss the ground ; then, at the same time, cast a glance at the *divine Majesty* overhanging you and your wretched *insignificance.* " What art Thou, O my God, and what am I ?"—A deep feeling of humility, dependence and total submission.

II. *An act of confidence.*—Next, free yourself from all thought of self, and fix your attention upon the infinite *Loving-kindness.* —Call God by the name of *Father,* uttering the word with love several times.—Put yourself in an atmosphere of security and love.—Feel that you are a beloved child, and promise to be a generous child.—Let nothing reign in your heart but confidence.

Another method.—If you have any holy familiarity with Jesus, go to Him like the Apostles when they awoke, to see Him and get His blessing, and to receive His orders.—You can mentally put yourself at His feet and kiss them for some time ; take His hand and place it upon your head, or else let His

gentle look go through you: He only knew how to love!—He has the same heart! And He is all-powerful!

NOTE.—This exercise may be usefully combined with your *first* Particular Examen, the anticipatory examination, of which it will be the prelude (see *Pratique de l'Examen particulier*, p. 8).

A counsel of the highest importance.—Would not a few renewals of this kind be well distributed now and then throughout the day to give help amidst the feelings of depression and languor which often overwhelm us? Moreover, this is just what St. Francis of Sales so strongly advises under the name of *spiritual retreats.* "Therein lies the great work of our perfection. This exercise makes up for all the rest, and cannot be made up for by any other."—If we only suggest it, in spite of its importance, it is because it is among the exercises that *nourish* piety habitually; but here we have only to set forth the means which are fitted to reanimate the exercises themselves. This morning spiritual awakening admirably prepares the way for improving one's meditation and communion.

One of the greatest forces for renewal is to be found in *long* visits to the Blessed Sacrament, visits an hour long, for instance,—and that in spite of our natural impatience.

NOTE.—See Vol. I, *An attempt at the interior life* (p. 221).

II.—PROBATIONS

i. The Value of this Method of Renewal

A probation is nothing else than a month's very special cultivation of a virtue, devotion or duty.

Such a means as this wonderfully enters into our method, which is to *specialize effort*, and gives it an incomparable strength, that of *continuity*.—During thirty consecutive days, we shall be face to face with the same object. Every day, illumined with the light of the day before, will lead our minds still further on. There will be, no doubt, periods of weariness and flatness; but owing to the energy of a latent work going on nevertheless, our views will become more extended and penetrating; a host of unsuspected imperfections will be revealed; our increasing desires will go in search of useful means, and the holy thrill of life will make itself more and more felt in our reanimated being.

ii. The Use of Probations

There are little books which give directions for probations. Made up of thirty meditations, they provide reflections for each day. But beware of thinking that these meditations constitute the exercise itself Like the

particular examen, of which it is a happy extension, it requires one's attention throughout the day, a courageous attention which returns constantly to its root-idea, but an attention which is wise enough to lend itself to all other duties. It is like a holy care which leaves one free; it is like a subtle spirit pervading everything. Our thoughts and deeds and prayers are penetrated by it, but our life pursues its ordinary course.

To assist this reforming movement, one chooses the same subject for one's spiritual reading and examination of conscience, and for one's intercourse in visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and especially as the grace to be asked for in one's uplifting of heart during the day.

If this means proves irksome to you; if you feel called by the Holy Ghost to the simplest sort of union; or else, if the subject is of no practical interest to you, leave it alone without any remorse, using with regard to it the holy freedom of the children of God. Only beware of giving it up from fear of trouble.

Could you not, at any rate, retain some useful part of it, taking the subjects of meditation for your reading, and watching over yourself especially as to the subject proposed to you?

II.—PROBATIONS

i. The Value of this Method of Renewal

A probation is nothing else than a month's very special cultivation of a virtue, devotion or duty.

Such a means as this wonderfully enters into our method, which is to *specialize effort*, and gives it an incomparable strength, that of *continuity*.—During thirty consecutive days, we shall be face to face with the same object. Every day, illumined with the light of the day before, will lead our minds still further on. There will be, no doubt, periods of weariness and flatness ; but owing to the energy of a latent work going on nevertheless, our views will become more extended and penetrating ; a host of unsuspected imperfections will be revealed ; our increasing desires will go in search of useful means, and the holy thrill of life will make itself more and more felt in our reanimated being.

ii. The Use of Probations

There are little books which give directions for probations. Made up of thirty meditations, they provide reflections for each day. But beware of thinking that these meditations constitute the exercise itself Like the

particular examen, of which it is a happy extension, it requires one's attention throughout the day, a courageous attention which returns constantly to its root-idea, but an attention which is wise enough to lend itself to all other duties. It is like a holy care which leaves one free; it is like a subtle spirit pervading everything. Our thoughts and deeds and prayers are penetrated by it, but our life pursues its ordinary course.

To assist this reforming movement, one chooses the same subject for one's spiritual reading and examination of conscience, and for one's intercourse in visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and especially as the grace to be asked for in one's uplifting of heart during the day.

If this means proves irksome to you; if you feel called by the Holy Ghost to the simplest sort of union; or else, if the subject is of no practical interest to you, leave it alone without any remorse, using with regard to it the holy freedom of the children of God. Only beware of giving it up from fear of trouble.

Could you not, at any rate, retain some useful part of it, taking the subjects of meditation for your reading, and watching over yourself especially as to the subject proposed to you?

If you keep the same subject as you had the time before, take care to define it *afresh*, and try to introduce some *accessory* modification to revive interest in it.

ii. The Method to be Followed

The essential thing is to have a thorough understanding of this means, the question of the method to be followed is but secondary. Everyone must adopt that which best corresponds with the *conditions* in which he lives. Every method is good, if it leads to the end in view : the renewal of our dispositions, the choice of our resolutions.

Here is an outline of a few practices and counsels.

1. The *day before, in the evening*, say to yourself : to-morrow I will try to renew myself thoroughly ; to-morrow I will get nearer to God.—Take pleasure in the thought now.

In the morning, pay especial attention to your renewal of the dispositions of confidence and open-heartedness.

During the day, make frequent returns to God, and put more heart into them.—Set yourself some penance : a time of silence, privations.—Keep closer watch over yourself, speak less, and in a lower voice, walk more slowly.—Avoid curiosity and mental dissipation.

2. For the *special exercise* of renewal, arrange to have a fair amount of uninterrupted free time. One can make many pious acts while hastening on, and amidst distracting occupations; but, to *dive within one's self*, one must have free time for recollection.

Read over your plan of regulations, your last month's resolutions, and sometimes, those of your annual retreat.—Make your preparation for death, or any other exercise to stir your affections.

Lastly, fix upon definite and practical resolutions, and then be brave enough to put them down in writing. (At the end of this book, you will find a table to fill up, which will make the work easy and practical.)

3. In the *evening*, you will go to bed earlier than usual, in order to entertain yourself calmly and without effort with the thoughts, regrets, and resolutions of the day, which you will end by offering yourself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, if you have not done so already.

NOTE.—At your next confession, it will be a good thing to give an account of this retreat. On that occasion, you may, by way of exception, enter more fully into details.—The table, if filled in, will wonderfully simplify what you will have to communicate.

IV.—THE ANNUAL RETREAT

This is the means *par excellence* for a *complete* renewal! In this, at your leisure, and with that continuity which is alone fully effective, you put yourself in the clear light of supernatural truths and enter into a full knowledge of yourself.

Gradually, as in a dark place, your eyes get accustomed to fathom the darkness, and end by making out the imperfections and defects which escape our notice day by day. God comes nearer to the soul who has yielded herself to His call; He comforts and often consoles her.

Long prayers and prudent mortifications reanimate the spiritual vitality. Finally, from all this light and sweetness, and from all these concentrated efforts, spring resolutions which will lay the foundations of a higher life.

CHAPTER IV

SELF-REFORM THROUGH JESUS

JESUS OUR MODEL
JESUS OUR LIFE
JESUS OUR LOVE

SELF-REFORM THROUGH JESUS

We have now come to Jesus. He has been drawing us towards Himself all along. His influence has been felt throughout our remarks, and from time to time we have caught a glimpse of His winning features. Now we are to look upon Him at leisure face to face. Certainly, if this is demanded by all kinds of religious action, self-reform calls for it imperatively.

Two methods of self-reform presented themselves to us, both of them holy. The first is the method which regards our defects directly and takes steps to overcome them : this is the one we have just explained. The second consists in looking at Jesus rather than at our defects, and in transforming our souls, so to speak, by assuming His.

I. This method opens up a very simple way to those who are perplexed by a multiplicity of inquiries, and it admirably suits those who go directly towards divine union. Besides, let us make no mistake ; the method of direct opposition borrows from this one all its helps, but without being clearly conscious of doing so.

Though it is, indeed, little known by most

Christians, it is, nevertheless, the traditional method. St. John and St. Paul were its glorious propagators.—It is summed up in one word: *"To restore all things in Christ, Instaurare omnia in Christo."* A number of phrases explain it: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.—Be imitators of Christ.—Be clothed with Him.—Let Christ live in you.—Be Christs.*

Jesus, then, is the *model* on whom we ought to reform our thoughts and feelings and conduct. But these new thoughts and feelings, and this inward influence, which form our external behaviour, come from a *hidden life* which Jesus exercises within us. And since we are all of us, either in fact or by rights, participators in this life, there should reign in us a *new love*, transforming our mutual relations, just as our love of Jesus transforms our individual lives.

II. What? Is Jesus to be the model I am to reproduce, the life of my soul, the love, too, which is to unite my heart to His and all the hearts of all men to one another! But He is God, and is infinite! And as for me, I am but a poor human being, essentially weak, and weak, too, by heredity!

No doubt Jesus is God, and His infinity remains for ever hidden in His Father's breast; but He is man, too, and it is as man that He reveals Himself, and communicates and mingles His love with ours.

The God in Him, it is true, bears on the Man-God towards His destiny, and transforms Him by imparting to Him something of the divine nature ; but the Man-God also makes us participate in that destiny and nature. How could He be anything else than our *model?* From whom could we learn divine behaviour ?—How could He be any other than *our life?* Whence otherwise could we get the thoughts and feelings that are so far above us ?

III. Let no one say : this method is too beautiful for my soul with all her imperfections ; it is too high for my insignificance which cannot attain unto it ; it remains the privilege of a few select souls !

Know, moreover, that the state of grace, even in the lowest degree, necessarily involves this *destiny* and *nature,* and *the life of Jesus* in us, though in many it may exist only in a rudimentary way, and be unconscious and not very worthy. In one, a nugget of gold or a diamond embedded in its coarse stratum ; in the fervent, riches developed and indefinitely enhanced !

If this rapid survey fills you with a desire to fathom this mysterious doctrine more deeply, follow attentively the few explanations which our limited space permits us to give.

Jesus our Model

An ideal is more than a model. We copy a model, we pursue an ideal. The Ideal is the idea which realizes a type, not only in its truth, but also in its beauty. Jesus, whom we may imitate, is of inimitable beauty.—As a model, He is offered to us for imitation, and is stripped in a manner of everything that goes beyond us. As an ideal, He unfolds to the devout all the immense heaven of His inner beauty.

I.—Jesus is our Ideal Model

I. History shows us humanity fallen, selfish, and often cruel; and what we see around us proves that, despite all the progress achieved, humanity still bears the brand of its fall.* Let us be satisfied with

* God intends to get His greatest glory from the fact of man's fallen state, and therefore decides that man is to raise himself by free-will with the help of grace. The realization of this plan involves these two consequences: the permission of numerous ills, the permanence of means for recovery. The Church, even in her rulers, is made up of free-wills, and therefore, must be subject to defects and abuses; but, as the guardian of the means for recovery, she will nevertheless transmit Truth and Grace. This contrast will not upset any enlightened mind, for it will distinguish, and that with admiration, in

considering that part of humanity which consists of ourselves. It still retains enough low traces, enough bad impulses, to show what we should be but for the grace which has moulded and sustained us; what we should easily revert to, if we were left to ourselves. Oh, how much sensualism and curiosity and inconsistency and irritability remains! What an amount of ridiculous and painful vanity! What humiliating thoughts and desires! Lastly, how many temptations, which do not make us incur guilt, but which reveal our wretchedness to us! Are we really good? Does our moral value show any increase? Have we, at any rate, the will to improve?

II. And while, with bent head, I groan over the sad state of my soul, before me a shining dawn arises with its wondrously beautiful beams. Everything retains its usual proportions: it must, indeed, be earth! And on this earth I see One like myself, and yet quite other than myself! I contemplate Him in the successive states through which we all pass: first, a child, and then, a youth; then, a full-grown man; and always very poor, far poorer than myself! I follow Him, and never see Him seeking a single pleasure of the senses, or of curiosity or vain esteem.

---

history, the city of God and the city of evil; and, in each individual, the dualism of evil impulses and efforts towards goodness.

He is patient before His enemies under vexations and contradictions. With Him I take my place at His humble table ; I handle the tools He uses in His work. Deeply touched, I watch the drops of sweat upon His brow. And then, I join His disciples, and hear Him bless all that we despise : poverty and tears and persecution.—Why does He live this life and utter this speech ? It is because Jesus is not of this world, and I do not wonder that He does not care for what it has to offer. He comes from heaven and returns to heaven, and heaven is so beautiful ! But is not this heaven what He offers me, who understand nothing but this life ? If He is of heaven, I, too, am of heaven, and heaven means the very happiness of God and union with the Infinite !—I now begin to understand these words : " He went about preaching the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God means God reigning over my desires and hopes ; it is God, my life's end ; it is heaven's light shining over the world and scattering through it visions of purity and detachment and sacrifice and love indeed ; for here and hereafter God is love.

Why, O Jesus, appearest Thou to us thus, so much greater and better and more lovely than all our dreams ? Why dost Thou dazzle us in our darkness with the brightness of Thy perfection ? Thou art great, even when Thou art a poor and unknown infant in a

crib. Thou art still God, even when Thou makest Thyself the least of men! There is something divine in all that emanates from Thee, and in all Thy doings there seems to be some uplifting heavenly influence.

O Jesus, I acknowledge with admiration that Thou art the *model* for the raising of our fallen nature, and the *ideal* to which we must aspire with the help of divine grace.

II.—JESUS IS A MODEL WE CAN IMITATE

To make this model capable of imitation, three things were required: 1. the model must be in the same conditions as ourselves, and therefore, God had to abase Himself, *to take upon Him our flesh and become man;* 2. the Man-God had to be so beautiful and good as to attract us, and so that His perfection might be the ideal towards which we must ever draw nearer and nearer; 3. all His acts and words and life had to be full of examples within our reach.

I. Jesus likes to call Himself "*the Son of Man.*" He is a man like ourselves, made of body and soul. This soul is only the soul of a God by being so denominated: its intelligence only embraces the infinite with a partial view; its heart only loves with a limited love. This intelligence and this heart are created.

We need not wonder at this doctrine; it

is of faith. Let us not suppose that it lessens the object of our love, and thus does injury to any tenderness of affection. When we have drawn the necessarily confined boundaries of His humanity, we shall nevertheless say to Jesus : Thou art the Infinite One ! When we have shown Him in the depths of His nothingness, the humble adorer of His Father, we shall not stop from prostrating ourselves at His feet in deepest adoration, for He, too, is God, God in virtue of His *Personality !* But if His Person extends its nobility to the soul and body it has united to itself, it cannot communicate to them any of its infinite qualities. In creating them, God did not part with the least portion of His substance in their favour ; and in appropriating them to Himself, He does not in any way receive the least intrinsic increase from them.

This sublime antithesis inspires with its divine poetry our liturgical chants and sacred litanies : Jesus is the Infinite One, and He is nothingness !—He adores, and He is adored ! —He enjoys unmixed bliss, and He undergoes the martyrdom of Calvary !—On the one hand, there is His divinity ; on the other hand, there is His humanity. The Person of the Word joins them together without confusion !

O truth, how luminous thou art, and how well is it that thou art revealed to us ! Thou

showest us a Jesus, who, by unfolding His littleness, draws near to us!

II. If, from the divine point of view, Jesus is narrowly limited; from the human point of view, on the contrary, He is indued with a kind of infinity, for He exhausts all the fulness of the qualities which Omnipotence can enclose in a human being.

How beautiful is the soul which He has assumed and formed! No, indeed: none of our most daring pictures will combine enough of spotless whiteness, of powerful intuition, of holily impassioned love, to give any satisfactory notion of its perfect essence. All the pages of poets and portraits of painters, wherein an attempt has been made to portray its features, do but move us to pity!

O Jesus, how can we imitate Thee? I am but a child of this world, which keeps me here below; a fallen being, capable of any evil! Thou art an ideal which I can admire, but which I cannot pursue!—And nevertheless, I find it so fair that, in my own despite, all my desires go towards it; it appears to me so true that my reason will be satisfied with nothing but the light of it. My wretchedness, and even my sins, proclaim its necessity.—O Jesus, to live according to Thy law means goodness; to live as Thou hast lived would mean perfection! Under Thy rule, we should all be good and kind,

and peace of infinite sweetness would pervade the world!

III. Our divine Saviour did not come into the world to display before our eyes His ideal of perfection; for this He hides until the dawn of eternity. To fallen man, He only brings a model which he can imitate.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

See Him for thirty years living as we live. He is a carpenter's son and is Himself a carpenter!— hen His hour comes, He comes forth and speaks, and in the simplest language He embodies the sublimest truths, in the most human forms the divinest of feelings.—He chooses His friends from among the most humble, and He loves them with a love like ours. He never despises even the most degraded of human beings.

He works miracles, but did not the prophets do the same? And He gives His disciples the power to work greater miracles than Himself!—Why did He not practise the extraordinary austerities which so strike our admiration in so many of the saints?— He purposely puts aside anything that would be too high: He wants everything to be within our reach; and His life, like His words, only reveals His Godhead by its measured, living, and powerful perfection, so that men may love it without having seen it ever realized in anyone but Him!—

He brings us the supernatural which is uplifting rather than the supernatural that astounds, and He seems to make life divine by His virtues rather than by His miracles.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Jesus becomes not only a model, but a model which can be imitated; hence, we have to copy its outlines.—He became a Master, and a Master who speaks our own language; and we have to study His maxims. "The Master has said so!" exclaimed the disciples of the old philosophers.—"Jesus has said so!" Such, in the spirit of ardent discipleship, should be our noble motto.

He also became a "Man of sorrows": our redemption demanded it. But His suffering body, His tear-filled eyes, His cruelly rent heart, His wounded soul, all these remain throughout the ages to proclaim the *law of expiation* we must undergo; the *example* we have to follow; and, for those who are worthy to understand it, the sublime *love-chal enge!*

If your soul is capable of admiration and enthusiasm, love to contemplate Jesus.—Do you feel that affection is your need? Lean upon His adorable breast.—Are you one of the brave who are attracted by service and self-sacrifice? Follow Him to Calvary.—Jesus offers us every kind of beauty. His teaching imparts every sort of generosity.

He is the ideal that draws us towards the Infinite.

Study Him, look upon Him ; but look upon Him well. Let the features of His face, let His example and His words enter into you and impress you, and fashion in you the ideal of truth, detachment, and love, which make the soul Christian : for Saints are nothing else than exquisite copies of Jesus.

What do we think now of our sense-pleasures, our curiosities, our desires for this world's satisfactions, and of our vexations and vanities ?—Oh, let us be children of light, new creatures ! Let us strip ourselves of all disfigurements. "That which is on high," let that be the object of our endeavours. *Quæ sursum sunt quærite.*—"That which is on high," that is what I want to know. *Quæ sursum sunt sapite :* a knowledge that discerns and relishes ; a knowledge which leaves the soul open to this world's joys, if God gives them ; lastly, a knowledge of Jesus Christ and of Him crucified, which puts the ideal of a restored humanity in the greatest heights of expiation.

Let us earnestly ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus. Let us try to find Him in our reading, but above all in our meditations : books contain this knowledge, but meditation alone can discover it in them.*

* Let us give the first place to meditation and spiritual reading dealing with the knowledge of Our Lord, and His life and mysteries.

During the day, let us think of Him, and sometimes let us love to lose ourselves in contemplating His partly revealed loveliness.

And only think ! there are hosts of Christians to whom this Jesus is but a stranger !

Jesus our Life.

Note.—To get a better understanding of what follows, read what we have said of God's action within us (p. 229).

I.—WHAT LIFE IS

Here let us practise still deeper recollection. We have not now to set a visible image before us, but to try to fathom a life which, like every life, is indefinable: a life hidden within us in the depths of our regenerated being.

Let us first ask ourselves what life is; not life as a series of acts, a succession of days that make up our existence; but life as an inner force, sometimes latent, sometimes conscious; an interior principle giving rise to our actions and to the evolution of our being. —I feel, I enjoy, I suffer, I determine, and I act, and the prime mover of all this, its real agent, is life.

The moral life which I have is a human life. If I make a determination in accordance with the ideas of reason only, if I yield to convictions or fears or likings or dislikes, the impulse comes from within, even if it is generous and productive of self-sacrifice; it is my natural life, which has, indeed, its rules

of morality, its beauty and its *rôle*, and its heaven-sent help.

But, in the very centre of this natural life, appears an entirely different principle of action, that of grace ; and its function is to change the form of our being and of our activity : this we call the supernatural life, which transforms us in a way into a sort of divine nature.

Unfortunately, before admiring it, and in order to understand it better, we have before us the hard task of making an analysis of it. When the botanist finds some beautiful unknown flower, is it not his duty to begin by pulling it to pieces ? He regretfully dismembers its different parts, opens them out, and cuts them up, whilst he searches the torn-up flower to discover the secret of its organization. This seeming profanation is really a noble way of extracting one of life's mysteries.

Our study of the heavenly flower, which bloomed on our poor earth and is called Jesus, is equally indispensable, and shall be carried out with still greater reverence. No, it is not enough to inhale its odour and to admire its beauty ; we must come to know it thoroughly and scientifically, if we may venture to say so. Let us then break it up into its constituent parts, let us look at them one by one in their essence and functions ; and then our idea of the life of Jesus within

us, which is generally rather confused, will be comprehensible as far as the actual infirmity of our intelligence allows, and as far as our need of knowing it requires.

II.—HOW JESUS IS OUR LIFE

I. The supernatural life comprises two elements (see p. 297): *sanctifying grace*, a true participation in God's nature which transforms the soul; and *actual grace*, God's real action within us, which sets our transformed faculties in motion.

But, to produce this transformation and to impart this motion is a work reserved to God.—Why reserved to Him? There is an excellent reason for it: this work requires omnipotence, and it is superior to that of creation.

But then, what part does Jesus play, and on what ground can we call Him into our life?

In Jesus, there are both the divinity and the humanity. The divinity retains all its infinite attributes, and fulfils all its proper acts. The humanity is made, like ours, of body and soul. As it does not constitute any personality, it enters into the personality of the Son of God.

His divinity can do nothing but what is divine: it cannot abase itself nor suffer nor adore nor submit. Although it knows our feelings and joys and sorrows in an eminent

manner, it is incapable of experiencing them. Nor could it win merits; and, although it can pardon, it cannot expiate.

It is wanting in these powers, and the sacred humanity supplies them to it. The sacred humanity has our manner of feeling and loving. Its condition bids it submit, and enables it to suffer, and binds duties upon it; and these duties are carried out freely by its holy soul; and hence it wins merits.

But these merits borrow a really infinite *value* from Jesus' divine personality; and although they are not by nature divine, they have the worth and splendour and scope of the divine. It is no mere name that covers them, but it is a personality that takes possession of them and transforms them.

II. Jesus merited for Himself the *fulness of grace;* and for us, the right to participate in it. What He imparts to us takes nothing away from Himself; for grace is not communicated like wealth by a cession of goods, but like life, by an extension of itself. Further, His own life is in some way increased by all our meritorious acts; for we are but one with Him: we are members of the great body of which He is the Head.

1. Hence, it is Jesus in His humanity who *merited* supernatural life for us.

2. It is again this humanity, wonderfully fashioned by the Word, which God uses as a

model in His transforming action, and which we make use of in our diligent co-operation with Him.—God has before Him always the image of Jesus ; it must also be familiar to ourselves.

3. The glorification of this sacred humanity is the *supreme end* of the great work of supernatural grace. It is towards this end that Providence makes all the events of the world and all the course of our lives converge.—We, too, should refer all to Jesus.

III. Now we see that He is the meritorious and exemplary and final cause of our life of grace ; but this triple influence is in a way exterior ; but life is defined as the interior principle of actions : I must therefore try to find another influence proceeding from Him, which is interior and present ; an extension within me of the life which animates Him. "Thus the vine extends in its branches, which it sends forth and always supplies with sap. In order that this life may thus extend to me, and that it may penetrate to animate me, it is necessary for the vine and the branch to touch in some way, that they be united, and that there be communication set up between them."*

All graces are riches acquired by Jesus, and He is constantly occupied in dispensing them universally. He is an essentially con-

* *Formation à l'Humilité*, Thirty-third Meditation—*Méthodes pour entendre la Messe.*

scious Fountain-head, which sends forth its waters lovingly to irrigate all the borders of the Church, and lets them fall as dew on every blade of grass. He is the noble Head which communicates supernatural life to every soul on earth, in purgatory, and even, in heaven itself. He is the Sun, around which all other lives gravitate.

His soul, which has its limits so far as concerns the infinite, has none so far as created things are concerned ; but it is in this human soul of His that all these wonders are perpetually occurring. "*He ever lives to make intercession for us.*" Jesus knows each one of us, each one of our needs, each one of our possibilities, and, at the same time, He finds in His store of merits all and each of the graces which correspond with them.

However, let us note well, for this is the knot of the whole question ; what He has merited, what He sees, and what He desires *as man*, He performs *as God*. And now, you can understand the mysterious words of the Gospel : "*It is not I, but My Father in Me, who worketh these wonders.*"*

* By the name of Father, here is to be understood not only the Father's Person, but His Divinity, for all exterior acts belong to all three Persons together. This is why, in our sacred books, each of them is represented as working within us. In what special mode does personal action occur ? With what special effects do these particular beauties indue us ? This is a mystery of hope.

Yes, it was the divinity in Jesus that worked the miracles; but yet it was His humanity that was touched at the sight of the sick and infirm; it was His own hand that was laid upon the eyes of the blind; it was His own voice that called forth the dead from the grave; it was His own prayers that devoutly invoked Omnipotence.

It is in the same way that all our graces reach us, by the power of God and by the human love in Jesus: all the light that clears up our uncertainties has passed through the fine mind of Jesus; the ardour that thrills our breasts comes from the warmth of His heart; and whilst we are welcoming the feelings that we receive from Him, He, too, is there to feel them and to give expression to them with us: His prayer is mingled with ours, His love unites with our love, and God the Father hears but one voice where His voice and ours blend together. Every thought and feeling *uninspired by Jesus*, all actions which are not done *with Him*, remain without any value so far as heaven is concerned.—The action of Jesus is inseparable from actual grace; but it is of faith that no supernatural act is possible without it.

III.—DOCTRINAL CONCLUSIONS

This doctrine opens up to our admiration unlimited vistas. The reality surpasses our noblest dreams. God alone is capable of conceiving such a union; should we, therefore, be incapable of appreciating it and living in it?

I. *Jesus living in us.*—This vital action, which is fully conscious on His part, remains generally hidden from us. It seems, too, as if this were the ordinary condition of all interior life. Thus, in silence and deep within us, vital changes in our organs take place: it is thus that the vine mysteriously sends out the sap and its strength into the branches. The branch does not feel the work that is going on within it; and we do not feel the operation of Jesus within us; but there is this grand difference: we know it! We know it by faith, just as by science we know the inner phenomena of physical life.

Ah! if only we could apprehend Jesus actually acting within us, what a delightful surprise would it be! Can you not see Him in heaven, in ecstasy of mind regarding each one of us from afar? To one He is giving a command; to another, a prohibition; to one He suggests a renunciation; to another, a fresh step upwards; thus He sends forth in-

cessantly His desires and warnings, and light and consolation, and participation in His sorrows, in a word, His life.

This is an astounding reality ! Jesus asks to live in me ! He wishes to be the principle of my determinations, and, as far as possible, of my tastes as well. *" Abide in Me ; and I in you." Manete in me et ego in vobis.* I will communicate to you My thoughts and inclinations and feelings and wise dislikes. It is I who will take any holy initiative. It is I who will set in motion generous impulses. It is I, too, who will be the remedy, for deep in all lives there is a healing power.

O Jesus, is it, then, true that we shall have a common life ? In the supernatural sphere, is it from Thee that I am to receive my thoughts and feelings ? When I love Thy Father, is it through my heart that Thou lovest Him ?—And I was persuaded that such union was a favour reserved for a few of the most perfect ; I did not even think of aspiring to it. And now I find that it is necessary, and behold it in myself unceasingly, if I live as a Christian !

I begin to understand the word which was addressed by the great St. Paul to all the faithful, and even to the least perfect, since he excludes all exceptions : *" Let none of you live unto himself. Let the life of Jesus Christ be manifested in your mortal body."*

At last, O Jesus, I enter into the full

meaning of the outpouring of Thy heart: "*You in Me, and I in you.*"

II. *Jesus enriches Himself through us.*—Jesus receives from us, and enriches Himself, by all the supernatural good that we do. He no longer goes hither and thither here below, and can no longer suffer and sacrifice Himself. He can no longer acquire merits.—It is for us to give Him, in His mystical body, a continuance of His work!

In making Him grow in us, we make Him grow in Himself. It is not the God in Him who increases in His infinity, nor the Man-God in His personal life; it is the Man-God, it is Jesus, who increases in His mystical body.

This mystical body is more than a moral body, such as a meeting of men, obeying one head to attain a single end: it is a more real body, comprising all souls, living in Jesus, and by which He acts. The union may here be called unity, for there is a *community of life* between the members and the head. Jesus, great and blessed as He is in His mystical body, becomes still greater and more blessed through us. His increase will not cease, until the last of the elect has entered heaven.

What! am I able to contribute something to what He is and to what He enjoys?—Yes, indeed, you can! And know still more: Jesus will *keep* for ever and ever the increase

received from you, the joy to which you have added, and through all eternity He will *bear in mind* that it is to you that He owes them, and He will *love* you more for ever in consequence.

If a little branch at the farthest edge of a great tree could think, it might say to the tree : As I grow, I make you increase ; and every spring, you extend along with me. Every little leaf, as it unfolds, makes you greater ; and every little flower that blooms, makes you more beautiful. Because I live, you, too, have more life. It is true that it is your life and your sap that enters into me with its fruitful activity, giving me the power to breathe the air around me and to assimilate the floating nutriment it contains. I grow by you and you grow by me : we grow together, because we are but one. And because we are only one, your roots in the depths of the earth work for me, and if your stout trunk trembles under the axe, I, too, tremble from end to end !

Thus I, poor little Christian branch, ignored and, as it were, lost in the mass of human foliage, I live by Jesus and help His increase : I shudder at all that injures Him, and in the infinite depths of His being, He thinks of me !

III. *Jesus waiting for heaven.*—On hearing of this delightful union, I should like to rejoice, and yet I feel sad ! What ! will

ignorant man ever rear his altars before the "unknown God," and will the devout come to kneel down at them without understanding?

Let us not wonder: this unknown God will reveal Himself, and then the life of Jesus will be unfolded. He sees it already opened out. His views are not confined to the borders of this world, they stretch out far into eternity; and hence He derives perpetual consolation. This world is so limited, and time passes so rapidly! Here below, we are in the swaddling-clothes of our first infancy, and our inner sense is but just half-awakened: we cannot be instructed in the higher truths, except by the necessarily obscure means of revelation. When a mother dreams of the future and sings to her little child: Some day you will be a poet or philosopher or valiant soldier, what does he understand?—When she uses all her heart's imagination to give expression to her tender affection, what does he feel?—These words pass like kisses, and leave behind them happy thoughts, which he will only understand when he is fully grown up.

O Jesus, Thou art this mother, and I am the child. All Thou murmurest at my cradle, and which I cannot understand, I feel that it is so sweet! To see it fulfilled, I have only, like the child, to wait till my life has reached its maturity. Heaven will

be the unfolding of my intelligence and heart in the light of glory !—When I see Thy infinite loving-kindness revealing and giving itself to me, I shall at last understand Thy condescending love which knew how to put up with so little, because it looked with certainty to the wonderful compensations of its heavenly home !

IV.—DEVOTIONAL CONCLUSIONS

i. The nature of this devotion.—ii. Its class.—iii. Its place.—iv. Its wonderful results.

i. It would be wrong to reproach this doctrine with being merely affective, for it is an incentive ; but every incentive is, according to its definition, a principle of movement : it potentially contains all that it is able to evoke, great actions as well as great feelings.

ii. What name may we give it ? Is it a way ? The life of Jesus in us is not a particular way, since it is a fact of universal occurrence ; a fact found in every soul and in each supernatural act, whether it be recognized, or unconsciously present. But it is not the same thing in the case of the *attention* paid to this fact and of the *use* of the incentive : they constitute an attraction ; and why should we fear to place it side by side with the attraction to Jesus crucified, or to Jesus in the Eucharist ?

However, an attraction is not a universal form of devotion. Hence, there is no question of imposing this attraction on everyone, because the fact concerns everyone. Nor must it be looked upon as a degree, and still less as the term, of perfection : for an equally high perfection may result from the influence of different incentives and attractions.

iii. What place should be assigned to this attraction ? Jesus is at once our Master, our Model, and our Life. As our Master, He has taught us all truth ; as our Model He has left us His example ; as our Life, He animates us inwardly in accordance with His teaching and example.

Teaching and example and vital action unite and complete one another ; and from these three combined sources proceeds, in the spiritual sphere, that plenitude of influence, which reminds us, in the physical order, of the beautiful daylight which is produced by the combination of prismatic colours.

What we have just said of the action of Jesus may be compared with what we have said of *God's action* (p. 229). In the supernatural order, these two actions are *inseparable :* their co-operation is necessary for the performance of every act. They nevertheless remain *distinct,* each of them exercising a special influence : God's action plays the part of the *efficient* cause, and the action of Jesus that of the *determining* cause.

Is that enough for the production of a supernatural act? No. To these great causes must be added a very small one, that of my free co-operation. What a marvellous thing! I have a place amidst these majestic powers!—And what responsibility, too: I am able to wreck God's plans!

iv. This devotion produces the most marvellous effects: it inculcates all duties and suggests all that is most conscientious.

Our first duty is to guarantee to the action of Jesus in us *its liberty;* and consequently, to disengage ourselves from all counter-influences. Our too human ideas, our too personal determinations, our petty tastes and interests, and particularly our defects, are such influences. How can Jesus be free, if we are slaves?

Our next duty is to *get an understanding of this action;* and consequently, to meet it with a recollected and attentive spirit. *"I will hear what His divine voice will speak in me."*—I will recall His teaching.—I will contemplate His example.—With no interior life, one could not be conscious of the life of Jesus.

Lastly, our third duty is to *enter* fully into this action. It comes to take hold of us by every good inspiration which has been wisely supervised; by every inference from the truths of the faith applicable to our state; by every prescription of duty.—To be faith-

ful to grace is to follow the movement of Jesus.

If I am thus keeping myself disengaged from self and recollected ; if I show myself at once docile and resolute ; if I constantly set my course by Jesus, "*it is no longer I that live, it is Jesus that liveth in me.*"—If He speaks to me within, I hearken to Him ; if He holds His peace, still I consult Him. Canst Thou think this thought as I do ? Canst Thou share this feeling with me ? Wilt Thou follow me in the step I am about to take ?—When I thus call, the shadows disappear, I perceive the truth.

If I pray carelessly ; if I shrink from a sacrifice ; if I am less gentle and patient and humble, I *hinder the activity* of Jesus and I *reduce His life.*—Would I deprive Him of one ray of glory ? Would I consent to deny Him a little happiness ?

What a rule for discriminating between our determinations ! What an incentive to our courage ! What a school of infinitely delicate attentions ! What an enchanting exercise for the interior life ! What a disposition towards intimate and confident prayer !

Oh, how sweet : to live by Jesus !—What an unexpected power : to add to Jesus !

O Holy Ghost, who art the instrument of these wonders, "*draw from Jesus, and give me much of what is His !*" Fill me

with treasures that He may be enriched thereby!

How just and how beautiful now appears to me the self-denial preached by the Gospel! To strip oneself of self is to make way for Jesus; it is to give His action within us its full liberty.—How fruitful is the death of nature, which, from the grave of our vices, causes the blooming of the divine life to spring forth! — In lending it my careful co-operation with conscientiousness and courage, I enter into it and it fills me with divine grace!

In the dazzling brightness of this truth, the notion of the Good is transformed. The Good is in itself an abstract idea, and now it becomes incarnate, and is called Jesus!

Jesus our Love

Love is the great transformer of souls. It it find them sensual, vain, selfish or timid, and prone to fall, it tears them away from everything and from themselves. At its call, generosity awakens ; in its light, disfigurements are put to shameful flight. The Magdalene, St. Peter, St. Augustine, are no exceptions in the band of souls conquered by love ; but the utterance of their names opens up every kind of hope. Jesus is the beloved of the Magdalene, St. Peter, and St. Augustine, and perhaps our beloved too. *Has He not come to kindle a fire on the earth, and what does He will but that its flame shall consume everything ?*

To treat of this love would be infinite. We intend to consider it only as the easiest and sweetest and most powerful means of spiritual restoration.

Holy Scripture represents love in search of the beloved. It shows it to us leaving its dwelling early in the morning, going through the cross-roads of Jerusalem, and asking of all the echoes : " *Have you seen Him whom I love ?*" A voice from heaven replies : " Seek Him in the Eucharist." And a voice from earth whispers : " Seek Him in thy neighbour."

In the Eucharist, thou wilt find Him as a centre of fervour; in thy neighbour, as a principle of charity.

I.—JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST, A CENTRE OF FERVOUR

Love demands an object belonging to its own kind, and wishes to have it near. The far-off and unknown God, the God of whom one can make no likeness, appears to us in Jesus, visible and near at hand. Jesus has all the aspirations of our nature. In Him, we find a God who can shed tears, open His arms to us, and clasp us to His bosom, a human God.

Jesus of the past is but a memory; Jesus in His Sacred Heart is only an emblem; Jesus far away in heaven is too distant from us! For heaven's sake, show me where He dwells, that I may find my way to Him!

Do you see the church which is nearest to you? There He dwells. You see it before you reach it, and at last you come to it. At any time, you have a right to cross the threshold. There, your steps will re-echo amidst the silence; there, a little lamp, suspended like a star, will be your guide, and in the cramped poverty of the tabernacle, you will find Him.—He is there, He whom Mary bore in her arms; He whom the Father in heaven has set on His right hand. Kneel

down, for He is God. Let your heart speak to Him : He is your Father. Share your troubles with Him, for He is your Friend. Let your resolutions be more and more generous, for He is able to uplift. Beg for pity for your sins, for He is good and kind. Be ashamed of your defects, for He is pure !

Speak to Him of His life and work and teaching and sufferings when He was on earth ; speak to Him of those who have loved Him : He likes to hear about His friends amongst men !—Cross the borders of time and space, and look at Him in heaven. Oh, how beautiful and great and happy He is ! Rejoice therein. Think that your place is there, quite near Him, and He is keeping it for you ! Is not this what our friends do on earth ?

And from all the past, and from all the future, come back to this tabernacle. How obscure is this tomb of His glory, and it is for you that He has thus buried Himself ! To-morrow, this altar will become a Calvary once more : the real sacrifice will be offered up, and Jesus will open the fountain of His sacred wounds afresh ; and even if you were the only one to come to meet Him, for you He will come down into this church from heaven !

You may receive Him and unite yourself closely with Him ; you may take Him and make Him yours, as Mary did of yore. But

consider this well: you are about to bring Him into contact with your thoughts and desires, and your unfortunately too often foolish fancies!—Oh, if I really loved, how ashamed should I be of my selfishness and unjust anxieties and vain pleasures! If I really loved Jesus, I should wish to please Him, and to be full of the beauty of living holiness, which fervour alone can give.

If I really loved, my life would all converge towards Him. I should fall asleep with this hope: to see Him to-morrow, perhaps, to receive Him! The hovering brightness would shine upon me, if I happened to wake, and would enlighten me when I arose in the morning. Without engrossing me during the day, the thought of Him would pervade the actions of my daily life, like a perfume. My prayers would be like errands of desire and gratitude; my acts of virtue, decorations. And if I were lacking in consolation and had nothing to say, I should ask for the practical generosity to be able to say for my dumb heart: Oh, if I could only offer and give myself up to Him! If I could immolate something to Him! If I really loved, this would be my want.*

* Among all the devotions addressed to our Divine Lord, this is why we have dealt with this one: 1. the Eucharist is the object of formal duties (Mass and Communion); 2. it alone contains Jesus present, and actually gives Him to us;

II.—JESUS IN OUR NEIGHBOUR, THE OBJECT OF OUR CHARITY

It is so hard for us to love our neighbour. The wrongs he does upset us, and his defects keep us at a distance from him. If he happens to be wanting in some of the good qualities we like, that is enough to make us dislike him. We demand a great deal of gratitude for what he owes to us; and we are vexed at the slightest forgetfulness. And we show ourselves, according to circumstances, rough or disdainful or annoyed. We allow ourselves to go so far as to speak ill of others, sometimes from secret jealousy, sometimes from unpardonable frivolity. We heap up reproaches which discourage, instead of rebuking with a kindness that touches the heart. When we have to do with those whom we see often, for instance, in our families, we are often cross or unfeeling, which vexes others; and sometimes we form irritable and complaining habits, which lead to division.

Ah, what a gloomy picture, and, perhaps, how sad a life! We acknowledge the evil; we regret it, and next day, we fall into it again.

---

3. it is the centre of all Christian worship, and the *raison d'être* of the priesthood; 4. it sums up all Divine wonders, contains all graces, and gives us the Sacred Heart.

But, as we were saying just now; night falls and dawn comes, and lo! everything is changed. The people round us are the same, but they seem quite different. As they reflect the new light in their various ways, even the most commonplace of them seem to have acquired a pleasant aspect. They are beautiful with heaven's light. Only the blind would not notice the change, for they cannot see Jesus shining in their neighbour.

i. The Doctrine

Here, let us not be satisfied with words: let us dive deep into the traditional teaching; let us ask ourselves, is it true that Jesus is really in our neighbour, and in what sense should we understand His presence?

If there be in the Gospel one thing more strongly affirmed than another, it is this: *Whatever ye do unto one of the least of Mine, ye do it unto Me.*

We know the long and remarkable application of this principle at the last judgement. Jesus only rewards and punishes on these conditions: the giving of bread, forgiveness, and words of consolation, *ye have given them to Me*, or *ye have denied them unto Me.*—*Love your brethren, love them as I have loved you.*—He goes so far as to promise forgiveness to him who forgives. Nor is this to be

wondered at in either case. To forgive is to love. Such is *His law*, His *new* law, His own law! Love for one's neighbour is what glorifies Him in this world, *it is the sign by which a Christian is to be known.*

These words of our Lord are generally taken only in the sense of a moral recommendation, as hearty as it is generous: do this as if you were doing it unto Me! But, they have quite another scope. Jesus is in our neighbour in a real way, like the father is in his child, by descent and blood-relationship, by a host of likenesses which are reproduced in the child and give the father a fresh life in him. Now, attend carefully:

1. When you consider the great event, God making Himself man, do you not begin to perceive that humanity thereby receives a universal adoption? Jesus is a member of this great family; every man bears an outward likeness to Him, every man is of His blood, of the blood of Adam.

2. But let us go further, and ask ourselves why Jesus becomes incarnate. It is to become a new Adam, a new first man from whom henceforward all the rest are to descend. Adam communicated to us what he had, human nature; as to the life of grace, an added life, he lost it, otherwise he would have transmitted it to us in a parallel way. But Jesus brings us a life of this same order. He has it in Himself. His life as

Man-God is a communicable life and a divine life, a life which so transforms us as to give us the power of entering into God's destiny.

It is, essentially and in its fulness, in Jesus. It is the sap which He wishes to transmit from the vine into the branches. Not a single man is excluded from this universal aptitude, neither sinners, nor the savages in the depths of far-off forests. Do you now grasp all the meaning of these words : " Whatever ye do unto one of the least of Mine, ye do it unto Me "?

3. This extension of His life, which is not limited by the will of Jesus, is, in fact, limited by the will of man. Every soul may refuse to receive this grace. What is more, it has the unhappy power, so far as it has any influence, of keeping away others.

The simple negligence of duties and want of zeal bring about this unhappy result ; for the destinies of men have been committed to their fellows : *Go, teach, baptize, and save.* —If an apostle shrinks from toil, a nation will have to remain in darkness. Families and nations may be the victims of the sins of a few !

Understand it well : the Church is not only God's work, she is also man's work. God offers the means of help ; man has to turn them to good account.—This solidarity, which unfortunately is the cause of so many evils, gives rise to admirable virtues.—

Besides, it comes of the nature of things. From the moment that we are living mingled together, we are bound to react upon one another. From the moment that we are endued with the power to do good or ill, we contribute to the edification or the ruin of our common work.

Thus enlightened, let us have a more keen sense of responsibility. Let us understand that God reckons upon us, and that He needs our goodness. Charity not only involves patience and amiability, it also comprises zeal. According to all appearances, if we carefully fulfil the *rôle* which is given to each one of us, we shall not only save our own soul. But if, on the other hand, we fall below the level of our responsibility, are we sure that many souls will not be the victims ?

ii. The Application of this Doctrine

Having reached this culminating point, let us cast a glance over the wide field of charity.

1. In the foreground, we see those who are in a state of grace.—Jesus lives in them and acts through them. Recall what we have already said of this union, then you will understand the respect and tender affection and self-sacrifice, and, if needed, the patience and encouragement you owe to the devout ;

for Jesus no more does away with human frailties in them than in you. Have a sense of the faith, know how to discern the gleams of the divine which shine through their defects. As says St. Francis of Sales : " See them all leaning on our Saviour's breast, and you will not find them aggravating or look upon them with reluctance." Be indulgent. " If an action could be regarded from a hundred points of view, we ought to look at it from the most favourable " (St. Francis of Sales).—And pray, let there be no murmuring and complaining, no bitter feelings or sharp disputes, no jealousies or divisions *among those in whom Jesus dwells.*

2. In the background you will find *sinners*, and they are numerous ! What family is so fortunate as not to contain any ? And among these sinners, how many are upright and worthy of being lovers of Jesus ! But they have given up loving Him : they no longer partake of His life : and even their best actions contain nothing that is of Him, and therefore they are without merits for heaven. They have a few rudiments of life : faith and hope are the remainder left of their baptismal mark ; they are still children of the family, lost children over whom one weeps.—Do we think of this enough ? Have we not come to lose the sense of sadness ? Yet, to one who loves, such a sorrow should be as painful as a wound.

Jesus loves sinners so much! Let us not be hard to them: let us offer them in all our relationships the likeness of God and of His loving-kindness living within us; let us surround them with the warm and indulgent affection that reanimates; let us always pray, and sometimes know how to speak.

Heretics fall into the two classes just mentioned. Some are in a state of grace; they have the divine life; they belong to the soul of the Church: Jesus has made them His own on account of their good faith, and He is in them as He is in us; as He loves us, He loves these poor children whom He does not openly acknowledge!—Others, who remain obstinately in known error, or who are guilty of grave sins, are sinners like our own, and still more pitiable because they are farther from the source of redemption.

3. There remain the *unbelievers*. These have no life of Jesus in them, but they have a *capacity* for receiving it. In partaking of human nature, our divine Saviour embraced them all in the desire to have them for His own. From the top of Calvary, He calls them all; by the price of His blood, He has purchased them all; He was athirst for all of their souls. When He stretched out His arms on the Cross, He threw them wide open for all of them, and from heaven, as from His Cross, He cries out to us unceasingly: Give them Me, fulfil My life!

No doubt, He has reserved to Himself some mysterious way of waiting for this or that well-disposed soul, without our direct co-operation ; but when He says : *Go, and baptize*, He invests those who belong to Him with a *rôle*, which is to them a source of glory and responsibility. It is to us that ordinarily falls the ministry of the conversion of the world. He who cannot act, can pray, suffer, and merit, lending Jesus the help He is willing to make one of His needs.

O ye who are devout, ye who often kneel near the tabernacle, draw deep draughts of charity from the Sacred Heart of Jesus : let your feelings be permeated with it, that it may purify them. Perhaps until now, you have not loved your neighbour as Jesus wishes you to do ! Certainly, love their good qualities, but, above all their qualities, love what there is of Jesus in them. If, indeed, good qualities fail, Jesus is always in them for you to love.

O ye who so much value Holy Communion, pity sinners who receive it no longer ; pray for the heathen who are unconsciously awaiting it ; and for missionaries who take it to them in their far-off wilds. Alas ! are there not churches near us which are equally unfrequented ? Love to visit Jesus in these new solitudes, and pour out at His sacred feet your tears and odours, and all the deep

love of a heart that is fain to fill not only the void in this little sanctuary, but, if it could, the vast abyss of man's ingratitude!

NOTE.—Those who wish to form themselves by Jesus will find a fuller treatment of the subject all through Vol. I of *Méthodes et Formules pour bien entendre la Messe*, and in Vol. II, in the Masses of the Sacred Heart. *La Formation à l'Humilité* also provides a whole series of Meditations.

Signs of Progress

Here, progress consists in the increase of the spiritual life ; let us, then, apply to it, by analogy, the signs which are characteristic of increase in the physical growth of any being.

1. *A greater consciousness of its own life.*—The soul feels that it belongs more to God.—It has more self-possession.—Duty and sin are more deeply felt.

2. *Appetite for the good.*—A more felt *desire* for knowledge and love.—The desire may exist without any pleasure ; it is enough for it to be real. A taste for Holy Communion is one of the most important signs.

3. *Activity.* — An *essential* characteristic, since it constitutes fervour—a characteristic which it is easy to verify : greater *regularity* in devotional exercises, a greater *abundance* of thoughts and feelings ; more *life* in them. —More constant and closer union with God. —Greater earnestness on behalf of souls and good works.

4. *Growth of strength.*—A more vigorous resistance of evil and of baser attractions.—An increasing generosity in the fulfilment of painful duties and sacrifices and mortifications.

5. *Reaction.*—This will be readier and more whole-hearted against all that would tend to

weaken the soul's life, such as, passing faults, —sudden frivolity,—unfortunate influences, —discouragement.—Readiness to get into proper trim.

6. *The sense of satisfaction.*—A feeling of *liberty* secured : liberty through defects being more under control, and through a calmer confidence.—A felt need of wishing to *pour out* one's heart into God's love, and of doing something to help one's neighbour.—A *desire* of heaven and its eternal union.—A readier acquiescence in the troubles of life and in one's spiritual shortcomings.—A more tender love of Jesus Christ.

A few only of these signs are enough to show there has been progress, for each of them is evidence of a little more life.

General Remarks and Exhortations

We are far from thinking of laying down regulations apart from which there could be no progress : God does not guide all souls in the same ways. Some go to Him in great simplicity by the mere observance of His general laws, without any particular means, except that they see Him everywhere, and in all circumstances consult His will. They have no one hour set apart for prayer, but their prayer is in some measure unceasing. These are usually excellent souls, whom any complication would only hinder ; and we would say to them : if you go to the end, why should you change your road ? If you have wings, why walk ?—Such a state as this, however, should be the subject of prudent self-examination, because it is out of the ordinary run and liable to illusions.

We cannot repeat it too often : means are but means, and not the end. Amongst the multiplicity of means, some lose sight of the end ; or else, taking upon themselves too much, succumb. Others, however, and this is much more common, neglect the regular use of means, and waste away in a poor mediocrity.

Let us conclude our remarks with the encouraging words of our Lord : " My children,

know well that in My Father's house there are many mansions. Those who have been converted at the eleventh hour find theirs, just as the saints of the desert do theirs, after their long penance ; and, between these two extremes, there is that of the weak and imperfect, and that of the innumerable Christians who will not understand Me till they see Me in heaven."

O loving Father, Thou wilt have all eternity to compensate Thee for all our present coldness, and to enjoy our delighted wonder ! —O Loving-kindness and Mercy, if Thou forgettest our sins, even the most terrible, Thou rememberest our smallest merits, even that of a cup of cold water given in Thy name !—O God of ineffable beauty, Thou wilt reveal Thyself to all, but not all will have the same comprehension of Thee. The purest eyes will see Thee more closely ; the larger hearts will possess Thee more fully ; the most eminent in virtue will best reflect Thy brightness. Every spiritual soul will expand in the vision and love of Thee in ecstasy ; but the sphere of each will be more or less high and glorious, and more or less permeated with divine fragrance !

And to think that each degree of sanctifying grace is an increase of being, of life, and of happiness ! that each merited increase will bring God eternally nearer to me, and give me an eternally closer union with Jesus !

It is fervour that multiplies these sacred rights in a manner which is, as it were, miraculous. Every act and sigh, even the smallest step of perfection, wins something more of the divine. Perfection and fervour alone can give an answer for every human heart which is fitted to meet the call of the divine Heart, offering men the hope of a love increased through all eternity!

"Oh, to love! Oh, to go forward!—Oh, to die to self and to come to God!" (St. Augustine).

A VERY USEFUL TABLE FOR RECORDING DEFINITE RESOLUTIONS AND CHECKING THEIR FULFILMENT

(To be filled once a month, and an account of the same to be given at your subsequent confession)

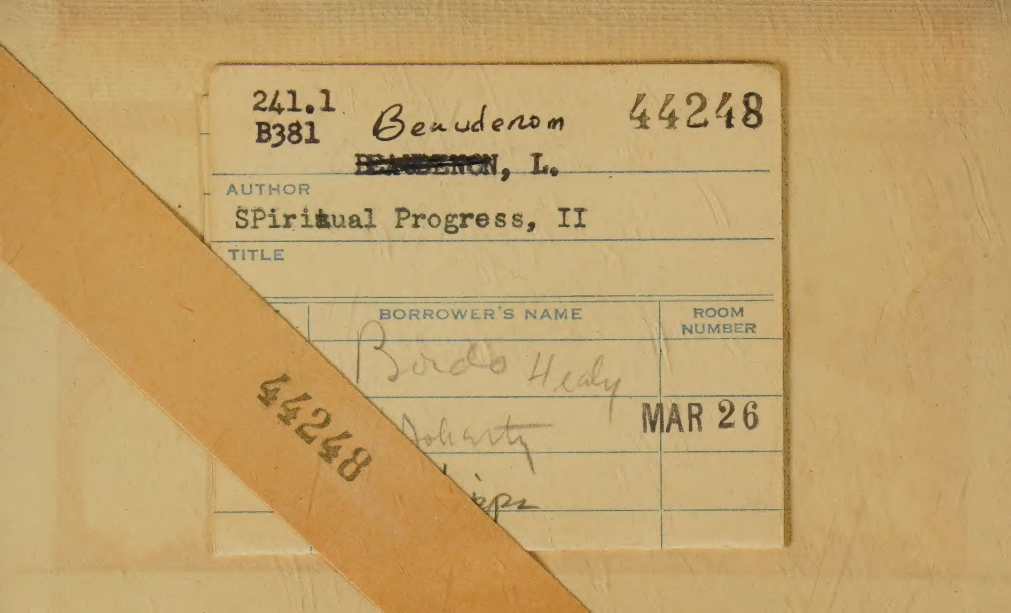
I was to keep watch over :	Means to be used :
There has been progress in :	This was owing to :
There was a falling off in :	This was due to :
I will keep watch over :	I will use these means :

Counsels.

The foregoing table will be most advantageously filled up at your monthly retreat, and at the next confession will be the time to discuss it with your director, entering into details.

At your intermediate confessions, be satisfied with giving an account of the subjects marked on the table.

Here a very grave question arises. Is it advantageous to seek direction at each confession ? Yes surely ; but only on condition that it shall follow up the monthly direction, a mere rapid survey of your fidelity to the resolutions then taken. To seek direction constantly and at length, occupies a person too much with himself, and takes away all spirit of initiative and weakens his energy, through his acquiring a habit of looking for strength from outside.


241.1
B381
Benederon
44248
BENEDEON, L.
AUTHOR
SPiritual Progress, II
TITLE
BORROWER'S NAME
ROOM NUMBER
Bordo Healy
MAR 26
44248